

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Reading Between The Lines: An Account Of The Cognitive Gain From Literary Fiction

Thesis

How to cite:

Phelan, Jonathan (2018). Reading Between The Lines: An Account Of The Cognitive Gain From Literary Fiction. PhD thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2017 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000d07c>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

***Reading Between the Lines: an account of the cognitive
gain from literary fiction.***

‘It is only fair, then, that poetry should return, if she can make her defence in lyric or other metre.’ Plato *Republic* 607d

Jon Phelan

PhD thesis

Philosophy

The Open University

September 2017

Abstract

My thesis defends the cognitive value of a close reading of literary fiction which I believe has been overlooked in the philosophical literature. I first outline an account of literary fiction in terms of the standard features of both literature and fiction. The diverse philosophical positions which hold that reading literary fiction ‘improves the mind’ attribute some significance to literariness but do not say how the literary features of literary fiction help to develop cognitive gain. An explanation is required in order to meet anti-cognitivist scepticism. I rule out the view that cognitive gain is irrelevant to our aesthetic appreciation of literature. My thesis locates cognitive gain in the *Verstehen* tradition and identifies five relevant senses of ‘understanding’ as the cognitive value at stake. The case is made that reading literary fiction as literature stimulates the relevant senses of understanding; in the course of the discussion I meet objections from elitism and subjectivity. I argue that a reader’s engagement with literary devices stimulates the five senses of understanding and supply examples from: irony, particular detail and precise phrasing, metaphor, play with perspective, ambiguity and repetition. Contrary to the contention that dominates the current debate, that a reader gains knowledge from fiction, I argue that it is the way readers gain understanding from literature that is more significant to cognitive value. Finally, I argue that the relevant senses of understanding may be transferred to an extra-textual context and so bridge the gap between understanding the text and understanding the world beyond the text.

Dedication: to teachers of literature and in memory of Dr. Philippa Sherrington

Acknowledgements:

Professor Derek Matravers and Professor Sophie Grace Chappell

Kate Allen, David Atter, Alex Barber, Chris Belshaw, Jonathan Binfield, Ros Bouverie, Nadia Campadelli, Jane Chapman, Cristina Chimisso, Maria Contrino, Emma Dillon, Catherine Elgin, Nathan Fox, Stacie Friend, Jane Heal, Darrell Hinchliffe, Mark Hogarth, David Jacques, Nicholas James, Eileen John, Peter Lamarque, Jenni Lecky-Thompson, John Lennard, Alexander Lindsay, Raamy Majeed, Susanne Mathies, David McBride, Martin O'Donnell, Sarah Ormrod, Fred Parker, Jean Phelan, Jon Pike, Sam Plumb, Carolyn Price, Rory Rapple, Brandon Robshaw, Alison Schwabe, Paul Suttie, Ted, Jack Thompson, Bridget Walsh, Chris Warne, Clive Wilmer, Catherine Wilson and all the students on Cambridge University's International Summer School who participated in my courses on the philosophy of literature.

Table of contents

Preface

The Philosopher of Literature's Dilemma	6-7
Background	8-9

Chapter One Literary Fiction as a Subgenre of Both Literature and Fiction

1.1 Fiction	10-21
1.2 Literature	21-28
1.3 Literary fiction	28-31

Chapter Two Literary Cognitivism, Anti-cognitivism and Non-cognitivism

2.1 Literary cognitivism	32-53
2.2 Literary anti-cognitivism	53-63
2.3 Literary non-cognitivism	63-73

Chapter Three Understanding Others from Understanding Literary Fiction

Introductory comments	74-75
3.1 Understanding human thought and action	75-88
3.2 Five senses of 'understanding'	88-104
3.3 Understanding <i>literary</i> fiction	104-114
3.4 The charge of elitism	114-118
3.5 The charge of subjectivity	118-125

Chapter Four The Cognitive Gain from Reading Literary Fiction as Literature

Introductory comments	126-128
4.1 Irony	128-135
4.2 Particularity and precision	135-145
4.3 Metaphor	145-156
4.4 Perspective	156-161
4.5 Ambiguity	162-166
4.6 Repetition	167-172
4.7 Aesthetic effectiveness	172-176

Chapter Five How Understanding Literary Fiction relates to the World beyond Literary Fiction

5.1 The standard account of checking literary fiction against the world	177-179
5.2 Concession to the standard account	180-181
5.3 Objections to the standard account	181-184
5.4 My thesis as an alternative model	184-186
5.5 Truth tracking v truth trailing relations	187-190

Concluding Remarks

190-192

Appendix (1)	‘it may not always be so; and I say’ by e.e. cummings	193
Appendix (2)	‘Affliction (I)’ by George Herbert	194-196
Bibliography		197-214

The Philosopher of Literature's Dilemma

It is widespread practice for philosophers of literature to draw on literary examples to illustrate an aspect of their philosophy. Here the philosopher of literature faces the horns of a dilemma: too literary an approach presents one set of difficulties while a deficit in literary examples presents another set.

There are numerous problems with a philosopher of literature taking too literary an approach in addition to appearing unjustifiably self-indulgent in offering a lengthy treatment of one's favourite literary work. One problem is that particular literary examples are hyper-specific and so cannot justify the general kind of analysis typical of philosophy. One cannot argue from the premise that 'X is the case in a particular sonnet' to the conclusion that 'X is generally the case in literature'. It seems that the best literary examples can provide is evidence that there is at least one case where such and such is true. Another problem is that extensive work on a literary example brings the writing closer to literary criticism and increases the chances that the philosophical point is lost.

My main contention in what follows is that the cognitive gain in reading literary fiction comes from the *process* of closely reading a literary fictional text rather than in gaining any specific propositional *content* from the work. As this is my philosophical thesis, one grounded in my own experience as a reader, I hope I may be excused some sojourns into particular literary examples by way of evidence.

The choice of specific examples is not always relevant in technical papers in aesthetics. David Lewis's argument in his paper 'Truth in Fiction' (1978) is not affected by his choice of Sherlock Holmes rather than another fictional character about which there is something true in a given fiction. Yet when an investigation becomes broader and concerns reading practices then specific examples from one's experience as a reader become more important. Taking too theoretical a line in these studies makes the philosopher of literature removed from the subject matter under discussion where his or her argument may work in theory but bear little relation to widespread reading practices. I do not intend to brighten the night sky with insights on any given literary text - only to show that, in at least some significant cases, the process of close analysis is fruitful and equips me with cognitive

skills that prove useful in an extra-literary setting. In grounding my thesis in what I take to be common reading practices of literary fiction, I seek to avoid the overly theoretical horn of the dilemma. Overall, I seek instead to offer an in depth and systematic account of one aspect of reading literary fiction.

Philosophers of literature tend to draw on the work of Dickens, Cervantes, Tolstoy, Proust or Musil but such works do not lend themselves to a convenient digest. I draw on Shakespeare in much of the text that follows because it is readily available and many people are familiar with the works. There is also helpful concision which enables me to make the point without excessive quotation. That Shakespeare wrote plays to be performed rather than to be pored over does not detract from the fact that these texts yield to close analysis in the same way that other literary texts yield to close analysis.

I take the following examples of effective practice in the philosophy of literature as guidelines. There will be times when I only need to cite an example of a certain kind of literary work, without exegesis, to make my point. Stacie Friend uses this approach to good effect in her paper 'Fiction as a Genre' (2012):

Many works of New Journalism, or creative non-fiction more generally, use true stories for their purposes, such as entertainment. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965) provides a good example, since Capote was clear that his purpose was to show that journalism could deploy literary forms... (Friend 2012: 184)

On other occasions, I may need to quote a passage in full and draw the attention of the reader to an aspect of the text or context. Catherine Wilson quotes two verses from Meng Chiao's poem 'Apricots Die Young' in her paper 'Grief and the Poet' (2013: 80-81) as an example of an elegiac work that has the capacity to move the reader without the reader knowing whether the poem refers to imaginary or actual loss. In this case, the reader of literature is left to do the literary work in his or her own time, that is to read the whole piece and gauge whether they are moved by the poem or not. More often than not, I shall quote from a literary fictional work and offer some close reading as this is the basis of my argument. In this respect I adopt Eileen John's approach in her paper 'Reading Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge: Philosophical Thought in Literary Context' (1998: 336-340) where there is extensive analysis of Grace Paley's short story 'Wants' in order to show how a specific work of literary fiction can give rise to philosophical reflection.

Background

Imagine watching a production of Shakespeare's *Othello* and commenting afterwards that the production made you understand love in a new and illuminating way. Unbeknownst to you, the person you address these comments to is Socrates who probes further. 'Many people think - at least before they *think* about it - that literature helps us to understand something better', he begins, 'but can this really be the case?' 'Surely if there is cognitive gain then a specialist source such as scientific psychology should be our preferred point of reference'. Socrates might question what it was exactly that we learn about love: that lovers in the opening buds of their relationship enjoy heightened emotions. 'Surely we know this fact already from direct experience or from reliable testimony. Does watching this conjecture played out or described in a poem or in a novel prove anything and if it does then what is it about literature that contributes to the reader's cognitive gain?'

Two conversations motivated my research. On the first occasion, a philosophy of mind student, while arguing vociferously against anomalous monism, claimed that one does not learn anything about the mental state of someone about to commit murder by reading or listening to Macbeth's dagger soliloquy. In the second conversation, a scientifically minded colleague argued that reading literary fiction never provides one with a worthwhile explanation, unlike other academic disciplines. I was struck by how unfairly the case against literary fiction was made in these cases: all fictions were grouped together and painted in the same neutral wash, there seemed to be naivety over standard practices of how to read *literary* fiction and propositional knowledge was the sole extent of the cognitive value recognised. This position, exemplified by Stolnitz's seminal article (1992), is my main target in what follows although I shall counter those who think that the reader's cognitive gain has no bearing on their valuing literature. A third target is those philosophers of literature who do not pay sufficient heed to the role 'literariness' plays in our valuing the cognitive power of reading literary fiction.

One upshot of taking the literariness of literary fiction seriously is that the landscape of the traditional debate over whether the reader gains cognitively from reading literary fiction is changed. I am aware that we appreciate literary fiction for multiple ends. For example, in August 1914 Shakespeare's *Henry V* was performed in Stratford-upon-Avon to raise money for the Allied war effort and to raise people's spirits. In 1944 the same play was

released as a film, starring Laurence Olivier, as a patriotic morale boost. I believe that *one* of these ends is cognitive gain and seek to understand this process more clearly.

In what follows I defend the thesis that:

The reader is encouraged to exercise certain cognitive capacities that constitute distinctive forms of 'understanding' from his or her close analysis and interpretation of a work of literary fiction qua literature (as opposed to qua fiction) which in turn puts the reader at an advantage when interpreting the world beyond the literary work.

Chapter One: Literary Fiction as a Subgenre of Both Literature and Fiction

There is a tendency in the philosophy of literature, less conspicuous in the philosophy of fiction, to use the terms ‘literature’ and ‘fiction’ casually. The terms appear to track an important distinction; one recognised by publishers, librarians, booksellers as well as any reader who expects a different kind of read from the shelf marked ‘literature’ than from the shelf marked ‘fiction’.¹ The problem is that in running the concepts ‘literature’ and ‘fiction’ together, no distinction is drawn between arguments that are sound only if the concept ‘literature’ is employed and arguments that are sound only if the concept ‘fiction’ is employed. As a result, the conclusions of such arguments are taken to apply indiscriminately to both literature and fiction, to the potential detriment of both. Some work needs to be done in order to determine what the conceptual relations are between literature, fiction and literary fiction. Once this is in place I can investigate the claim that the cognitive gain from reading literary fiction is generated from a reader’s engagement with literary fiction qua literature and not, as is too often assumed, qua fiction.

There is a tradition which takes all literature to be fictional by definition (Todorov 1973:7). Yet it is not clear why we should accept that all literature is fiction given that many non-fictional works are read and admired as literature. The variety of works considered ‘literary’ include works based on fact but fictionalised in their presentation such as Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* or Thomas Hardy’s poetry on the death of his wife. There are, in addition, non-fictions admired for their literary qualities such as: Descartes’ *Meditations*, Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, some of George Orwell’s essays and *The Song of Solomon*. The latter list are works that are classed as ‘literature’ but are not classed as ‘fiction’, while various novels by Dick Francis show that there are works classed as ‘fiction’ that are not classed as ‘literature’. One can say, along with others (Lamarque 2013: 525), that ‘literature’ and ‘fiction’ are not co-extensive terms.

¹ ‘The library concept of literature’ is defended in (Pettersson 2012:197) but remains vague over what criteria librarians use: book size, popularity, the publisher’s classification? Institutional accounts of fiction and literature are vague in the same way.

The distinction between ‘literature’ and ‘fiction’ may be further recognised through contrasting the writing and reading practices associated with these categories. A budding author who sits down to write literature nurtures a different set of ambitions to one who sits down to write fiction whether the former accomplishes his or her literary ambitions or not. Morrissey negotiated his contract with Penguin Classics with the promise that his autobiography was ‘literature in the making’; an ambition reflected in the highly stylised opening pages. Similarly, a reader will opt for a work of literature with the expectation of taking on a more challenging read than is expected in ‘mere fiction’ which we enjoy with the same light inattention as a box of chocolates. In spite of the various distinctions between ‘literature’ and ‘fiction’, there are recurring cases in the philosophical literature of the terms being treated as co-extensive. Here are three examples.

John Gibson frequently runs the terms literature and fiction together in Chapter Two of *Fiction and the Weave of Life*:

...we can begin to see how we can accept the ‘fictionality’ of literature – that a fiction is, after all, just that – yet maintain without contradiction that literature offers the reader a vital encounter with her world.

(Gibson 2007: 74)

Here, Gibson assumes that all literature is fiction. Examples are drawn in *Fiction and the Weave of Life* from literary works by, among others, Dostoevsky, Dickens and Shakespeare. For instance, Gibson argues that it is the *literary* language of Shakespeare’s *Othello* that conveys to the reader a sense of what racism is really like. So, when Gibson talks about literature he seems to have fiction in mind and when he purports to be discussing fiction, it is various features of literary language which support his argument (Gibson 2007:73-80).

A second example comes from Martha Nussbaum’s collection of essays, *Love’s Knowledge*. Nussbaum uses the terms ‘fiction’ and ‘literature’ interchangeably when she contrasts the full and fine detail of literary narratives to the nuts and bolts illustrations common in philosophy²:

² A similar criticism of the ‘extremely schematic’ illustrations used in moral philosophy is made by Bernard Williams (1995: 217). This criticism applies whether the schematic illustration is fiction or non-fiction. For Williams the important criterion is that the example is chosen from telling experience.

Schematic philosophers' examples almost always lack the particularity, the emotive appeal, the absorbing plottedness, the variety and indeterminacy, of good fiction; they lack, too, good fiction's way of making the reader a participant and a friend; and we have argued that it is precisely in virtue of these structural characteristics that fiction can play the role it does in our reflective lives.

(Nussbaum 1992: 46)

A similar point is made in a later essay, but this time with reference to literature:

It could not be shown well even in a philosopher's example, inasmuch as an example would lack the full specificity, and also the indeterminacy, of the literary case, its rich metaphors and pictures, its ways of telling us how characters come to see one another as this or that and come to attend to new aspects of their situation.

(Nussbaum 1992: 160-161)

In the first passage, Nussbaum lists what she claims are some features of fiction and in the second some features of literature. This is crucial to her subsequent argument, but she gives no theoretical basis for focussing on these features, or for classifying them as features of 'fiction' and of 'the literary' respectively. Some of the features mentioned (plottedness, indeterminacy) are arguably characteristic of fiction but not all literature, while others (particularity, rich metaphors and pictures) are arguably characteristic of literature but not all fiction. Yet the same assurance cannot be given to the other features listed. Nussbaum needs to be clearer about which properties belong to each category and needs to clarify the theoretical basis underpinning her selection.

In a third case, Catherine Elgin defends the claim that novels, poetry and plays can aid our understanding when she says:

Fiction helps. It highlights patterns, spells out implications, draws distinctions, and identifies possibilities we had not recognized in the welter of information before us.

(Elgin 1996: 189)

Yet it seems unlikely that she means any fiction: Jeffrey Archer as well as Geoffrey Chaucer. Elgin's argument, like those above, rests on certain features, in this case features of fiction. The four features, identified as promising a better understanding in the passage above, go well beyond any usual classification of fiction. Repeated motifs that highlight patterns, such as references to 'nothing' in *King Lear*, may more accurately be classified as a literary feature of a text as opposed to a fictional feature. Elgin, and others, might reply that 'fiction' is shorthand for 'literary fiction' in these contexts. This seems plausible but if objects are classified under two sortals then it is good methodological practice to clarify which sortal is relevant in order to avoid ambiguity. Or if both sortals are relevant, then it is good practice to distinguish in which way the claim may be made about each and give some account of the kind of relation that exists between sortals. Thus if I claim that nettle soup has health giving properties then I need to say whether it is owing to something in the nettles or because it is served as a soup or both. The same goes for the cognitive potential of literary fiction: one should specify whether we learn from a work as fiction, as literature, or both and if both how literary features stand in relation to fictional features.

These three examples are parts of much longer defences of cognitive gain from reading literary fiction. 'Cognitive gain' and on occasion 'cognitive power', 'cognitive advantage', 'cognitive affordance', 'cognitive value' appear in the following discussion as placeholder terms. The notion of cognitive gain is central to the thesis that I seek to defend in this project and a fuller treatment of this notion occurs in Chapter Three. At this early stage, I want to make two preliminary comments to give the reader some sense of what I have in mind. By 'cognitive' I mean, very broadly, what is related to thoughts and to the development of thoughts. By 'gain' I mean what the reader can do better, quicker and in the right direction as a result of reading literary fiction. Cognitive gain in the sense of developing one's thinking in the right direction need not equate to the acquisition of new propositional knowledge. The cognitive gain referred to may be presented as the reader coming to a better understanding of X having read literary fiction Y. This is enough for now as I want to explain the conceptual model set out in this chapter.

Four 'super-genres' are identifiable: fiction, non-fiction, literature and non-literature. As stated above, there are fictional texts that are not literary and literary texts that are not fictional. There are, of course, fictional texts that are literary; we shall refer to such texts as 'literary fiction'. The main aim of sections (1.1-1.3) is to provide a clear account of what is characteristic of texts which occupy this intersection between 'literature' and 'fiction'.

Both terms are loose and any attempts at strict definitions in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions are fraught with counterexamples. The proliferation of such peripheral cases which resist easy categorisation motivates my defence of an anti-essentialist account of both fiction and literature. By ‘anti-essentialist’ I mean a rejection of clear boundaries between concepts, specifiable in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. The boundaries are vague and there is movement between super-genres, but as we shall see, that does not prevent an account of fiction, literature and literary fiction being offered. A final word on methodology, this chapter is concerned with the categories of texts and in the course of what follows I refer to specific works which I take to be representative of these categories. I have tried to choose uncontroversial examples, unless controversy is required, but the argument is concerned with categorisation and does not rest exclusively on the examples cited.

1.1 Fiction

The aim of this section is to provide a plausible account of fiction before moving on to give a plausible account of literature. It is not always clear in the work of those defining fiction whether they have all fictional representations, printed works of fiction or individual fictional propositions in focus. I believe that whatever the specific endeavour the result in each case will have some bearing on what is meant when we call a text ‘fiction’ which is my interest. *Prima facie*, it seems easier to account for fiction than literature; after all doesn’t ‘fiction’ just refer to what is made up? Defining fiction is not this straightforward; for one thing many fictional narratives refer to facts about things that are not made up and describe real people, places and events. In addition, some predominantly factual accounts contain fictional elements. Thucydides says:

The speeches here represent what *in my judgement* it would have been most important for the individual speakers to say with regard to the current circumstances, while keeping as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.

(*History* I. 22 trans. Rhodes 2014: 65 my italics).

Further, there are some narratives that are made up that do not constitute the kind of fiction I seek to elucidate; such narratives include lies, jokes, an unscrupulous CV, counterfactual or alternative histories, thought experiments in science or philosophy and legal fictions.

Essentialist accounts of fiction, which seek a set of necessary and sufficient conditions on fiction, dominate recent discussion. The mainstream essentialist accounts of fiction state that a fiction (written or verbal) is an utterance where:

- a) There is a mandate that we imagine X where
- b) X is at most accidentally true.³

Friend has argued against the essentialist view principally by the provision of counter-examples. However, revealing what is problematic about the orthodox, essentialist view requires me to make an additional distinction, that (a) can be further divided into two constituent claims:

- (a¹) There is a mandate.
- (a²) There is a distinct kind of imagination at work.

(a¹) is usually specified along Gricean lines (by Currie and others); though for Walton it is a matter of the requirements involved in playing a game of make-believe. A more significant point concerns (a²) as the essentialist needs to give an account of what is meant by ‘imagination’ in a way that shows a necessary link between imagination and fiction.

Let us assume that, given the mandate, the imagination referred to is that of the reader of fiction and not the writer.⁴ There are candidate notions of what imagination might be: the experience of mental imagery, some form of simulation or make-believe.⁵ If imagination is taken in any of these three senses then it runs into Friend-type counter-examples. Friend’s principal criticism of the essentialist account is that the kinds of imagination specified are not particularly connected with fiction. Friend says that ‘[t]he invitation to imagine,

³ This account of fiction most famously occurs in Currie, G. (1990) *The Nature of Fiction*. New York: CUP, p. 45; others follow viz. Lamarque, P. and Olsen, E. (1994) *Truth, Fiction and Literature*. Oxford: OUP; Davies, D. (1996) ‘Fictional Truth and Fictional Authors’ *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 36, pp. 43-55; Davies, D. (2001) ‘Fiction’ in Gaut, B. and McIver Lopes, D (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. London: Routledge pp. 263-74; Stock, K (2011) ‘Fictive Utterance and Imagining’. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 85, pp. 145-61.

⁴ In Currie’s terms, between ‘the recreative’ and ‘the creative’ imagination (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002: 9-11).

⁵ For a detailed treatment of these kinds of imagination see (Friend 2008: 151-156).

whether explicit or not, is common to narrative works of non-fiction' (Friend 2012: 183). Two examples are cited. The first is Ernest Shackleton's *South*, an autobiographical account of the explorer's failed expedition to Antarctica, in which the reader is invited to engage imaginatively with the story. The second is Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* which explicitly invites the reader to imagine a setting and think about what it would be like to be present at one of Disraeli's lavish parties. Friend's examples act as a blueprint for this kind of counterexample.

Kathleen Stock (2011, 2013) seeks to retrieve the essentialist account of fiction in light of Friend's criticism with the following account of propositional imagining.

For Thinker T to imagine that p requires that:

- i) T entertain the thought of p being the case and
- ii) either T does not believe p or inferentially connects p to other thoughts where there is at least one thought that T does not believe.

Stock describes the relevant cognitive act in (i) as follows '...by imagining I don't mean anything particularly full blooded,' that is imagining need not 'involve anything particularly experiential' but 'thinking of a certain case as being the case' (Stock 2013: 887). A simple conjunction is sufficient for the inferential connection referred to in (ii). So, if p is 'I am typing' then this statement is not sufficient for us to say 'T imagines p'. However, if T thinks 'I am typing' and 'I am on the moon' then T is imagining. On Stock's account, if a text gives rise to imagining then this is sufficient for that text to be fiction.

However, Stock's account does not offer a thorough enough explanation as to why a text counts as a fiction; this inadequacy applies to shorter as well as longer pieces. Take the case of an anti-dualist philosopher contemplating Descartes' conceivability argument from the *Sixth Meditation* (Descartes 1968: 156). The philosopher is able to entertain the thought that dualism is the case but either does not believe dualism is the case or connects dualism to other thoughts that she does not believe such as God's omnipotence or that what is conceivable is possible. Stock would have us count the conceivability argument as fiction according to criteria (i) and (ii) but this categorisation is surely overridden by the context and the presence of other features such as the philosophical principle that 'if I clearly and distinctly understand X apart from Y (and vice versa) then X and Y are metaphysically

distinct and could exist apart'. I reach the judgement that Descartes' conceivability argument is 'an argument in the philosophy of mind' rather than 'a fiction'. At best Stock supplies a necessary but not a sufficient condition on fiction but her account does not include enough detail on what fictions have in common so does not count as a satisfactory way of determining what counts as fiction. An essentialist account of fiction may be retrieved with a better account of the imagination but at present imagining is '... a notion yet to be fully clarified' (Walton 1990: 21) and the trail goes cold.

Condition (b) above specifies that fiction is at most accidentally true and is simply a modifier of (a). Without (a) this modifier does not contribute anything relevant to genre fiction. Even if (a) were retrieved and the essentialist could point to a form of imagination exclusive to genre fiction, then it would still be unclear how (b) helps. Such a modifier would exclude works like Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Defoe's *The Plague Years*, Holocaust literature such as Elie Wiesel's *Night* or autobiographical fiction such as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as these works conform to a stronger truth condition than being no more than accidentally true. Further, condition (b) allows too many marginal cases such as a scurrilous rumour that is invented, carries a mandate that it be imagined and which accidentally turns out to be true.

The kind of marginal cases identified above might be dismissed as 'fiction with non-fictional elements' or 'non-fiction with fictional elements', but to do so would be to miss an important point. At least two different kinds of judgements are made in the classification of fiction and non-fiction. The first concerns which passages in the text include made up narratives and which are factual. The second concerns whether the work as a whole is to be classified as fiction or non-fiction. Many marginal cases demonstrate that one cannot move smoothly from a first order judgement about individual passages to a second order judgement about fictionality (Friend 2012: 186). For instance, there are cases where most of the text is non-fiction, for example Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, yet the works are classified as fiction. There are further instances where texts contain long passages of fiction but are categorised as non-fiction: such as the kind of history described by Thucydides in the passage quoted earlier or *The Song of Solomon*. The upshot is that we need a procedure to judge whether the work as a whole is either a work of fiction or a work of non-fiction. This is not provided by a passage by passage analysis alone. Let us move on to Friend's positive proposal as to the nature of fiction.

Underpinning Friend's account is Walton's distinction between standard, variable and contra-standard properties in his 'Categories of Art' (1970). I shall take a little time to elaborate this in order to make better sense of Friend's account and to lay the foundations for my adopting an analogous strategy for literature in what follows. Walton argues that we perceive works of art within certain categories: that is we perceive them under a Gestalt; thus I view one object as an impressionist painting or hear sound as a sonata (Walton 1970: 338-342). These categories of 'impressionist painting' or 'sonata' are characterised in terms of the properties of a work. Walton fluctuates between the terms 'property', 'characteristic' and 'feature' in his paper. I shall keep the terms stable and opt for 'feature' as the most neutral term⁶. The features of a work are divided into three sorts: standard, variable and contra-standard with each playing a different role in our experience.

A standard feature is a feature, the possession of which tends to place a work in a given category. For example, one voice imitating another tends to be a feature which places a piece of music in the category of fugue. A variable feature is a feature, the possession of which is irrelevant to the placing of a work in a given category. A fugue can be in two or three parts but this has no bearing on the piece's standing as a fugue. A contra-standard feature is a feature, the possession of which tends to disqualify a work from a given category. Walton says such a feature may shock, disconcert or upset. The tone and mood of Mozart's string quartet in G major are contra standard for a fugue, though the presence of standard fugal features leads to a final judgement that the piece is a fugue. It is important to note that the standard features of X are not the same as necessary conditions on X. The relevance of Walton's distinction is that we can recognise a genre according to the presence of certain standard features and the absence of contra-standard features; some examples are cited in the next paragraph. Friend's claim is that Walton's account can be extended to cover fiction and non-fiction. According to the anti-essentialist account, we recognise a text as fiction according to the presence of a cluster of non-essential standard features and by the absence of contra-standard features of a genre. The variable features, such as the length of the text or the language that it is written in, have no bearing on the piece's classification as fiction.

Let us give some thought as to what these standard and contra-standard features of fiction might be. According to Friend, we recognise a work as fiction according to the standard

⁶ See (Scruton 1974: 29-30).

features where such standard features may be further categorised as internal to the text or external to the text. Examples of standard features that are internal to the text include ‘...the use of linguistic or formal devices, stylistic choices, and structural properties (e.g. the inclusion of ‘once upon a time’, footnotes, first - or third - person narration, etc.)’ (Friend 2012: 189). First person narration is a standard feature of fiction but not science whereas a footnote is a contra standard feature of fiction but a standard feature in a scientific paper. This is not to say that fictional novels never contain footnotes or endnotes; David Foster Wallace’s novel *Infinite Jest* has ninety six pages of endnotes but is classified as fiction. One external standard feature of fiction is that substantial tracts in the work are made up and allow for poetic license. There are, in addition, contextual standard features which are derived from the circumstances surrounding a text. For instance, fiction tends to be written by an author who intended the work to be read as fiction. Authorial intention may be established through testimony if need be, such as an interview. Another external standard feature of fiction is that readers of fiction tend not to expect that the narrative in front of them describes anything in the world, though there may be detours into fact.⁷ Features that run contra-standard to fiction include the persistent reporting of facts or writing created with the intention to be read as fact.

Our seeing certain standard features indicates a work is in a given genre. The notion of genre plays an analogous role to Walton’s perceptual categories, giving Friend her conclusion that fiction is correctly classed as a genre. An obvious worry with Friend’s view is that Walton puts his argument in terms of perceptual Gestalts and we do not perceive written works under perceptual Gestalts as we do a fresco or a fugue. Walton admits this in a footnote and advises some modifications:

The aesthetic properties of works of literature are not happily called “perceptual”. For reasons connected with this it is sometimes awkward to treat literature together with the visual arts and music. (The notion of perceiving a work in a category, to be introduced shortly, is not straightforwardly applicable to literary works.)...though I believe that the central points I make concerning them hold, with suitable modifications, for novels, plays, and poems as well.

(Walton 1970: footnote to p.335)

⁷ Lamarque and Olsen discuss the case of proper names in fiction (1994: 79-82) and Stacie Friend has a forthcoming monograph on fact in fiction.

When I read Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1986) accompanied by Michael Kenna's photographs of Dartmoor I understand the work to be one of 'mystery and tension' from registering details in the text as much as from looking at the eerie photographs.⁸ The textual details include: that the disappearance and death of Sir Charles Baskerville was surrounded by local rumour, his disappearance occurred after a nocturnal stroll down a yew-lined avenue and that cries were heard by one witness. In this example the reader's sense of mystery and tension would be stimulated by symbolism and allusion in the absence of the photographs. Textual stimuli fit Walton's four conditions on recognising a category as much as perceptual stimuli in that a text contains: i) the presence of a relatively large number of standard features and a minimum number of contra-standard features of a given genre; ii) 'comes off best' when read as belonging to a certain category; iii) is written with the intention that it is thought of in a given way and iv) is produced in a society in which the category or genre convention is well established (Walton 1970: 357).

In order for Friend to draw an analogy between viewing something under a perceptual Gestalt and reading a text as fiction, she needs to show that reading a text as fiction makes a difference to our understanding and evaluation.⁹ This is discussed by Friend towards the end of her paper 'Fiction as a Genre' (2012: 198) when she asks us to read a passage from *The Surgeon of Crowthorne* first as a work of fiction and secondly as a work of non-fiction. Friend argues that on the first reading the use of free indirect discourse seems natural, while on the second reading we may wonder how the author gained access to such privileged information (Friend 2012: 197-201). She concludes that engaging with a narrative as fiction is a different experience to engaging with a narrative as non-fiction.

One accusation that may be levelled against this account of fiction is that it is circular: a text is fiction if it exhibits all of the features fictional texts possess. Yet in specifying what such features are and sorting them into those which are standard, contra-standard and variable, one points to phenomena outside the circle. Prototype theory works in much the same way in biology where we are happy that a description of bees in terms of the features most bees possess is not viciously circular. A second criticism is that the presence of standard features and the absence of contra-standard features together constitute a

⁸ I choose 'mystery and tension' here as it is Walton's own example in his paper (1970: 335).

⁹ I won't comment on the connection made between the classification of fiction and the appreciation and evaluation of fiction as it has no direct bearing on what is at stake here and is amply dealt with in (Friend 2012:195-203).

necessary condition on fiction. Yet this is to change the meaning of necessary condition from a prerequisite without exception to a likely preponderance with exception. The likely preponderance of X in Y is not a necessary condition on Y.

To sum up, Friend's account of fiction enjoys twin benefits over mainstream essentialist accounts. First, it does not have the problems attendant on reducing fiction to a particular use of the imagination. Secondly, Friend pays attention to the wider culture of reading fiction. The ultimate success of the anti-essentialist account of fiction should be judged on whether this account tells us whether a text is a work of fiction or not. The anti-essentialist account does possess the resources to recognise correctly a work as a work of fiction. *Pride and Prejudice* is classed as fiction as the work exhibits some standard textual features of fiction: dialogue between made up characters, authorial intention to write fiction and the consistent categorisation of the work as fiction by Austen's audience. There may be duck-rabbit cases where texts can be read as fiction or non-fiction but these are generally sorted out in terms of which standard and contra-standard features predominate. In the next section, I shall adopt the same anti-essentialist strategy for literature.

1.2 Literature

A definition of 'literature' seems as fraught with imprecision as 'fiction'. Both terms are as loose as they come yet we use both terms regularly without bafflement. The identification of what we take as particularly well written passages does not, on its own, tell us whether the text as a whole is a work of literature. Some authors, I have Wordsworth in mind, deliberately intersperse flat or neutral passages to act as a contrast to passages with greater aesthetic appeal. Further, it is not clear whether aesthetic appeal, whatever we take this to mean, is the only relevant criterion on our judgment of a work as 'literature'. This section advances an anti-essentialist account of literature along the same lines as Friend's anti-essentialist account of fiction.

In the preceding section on fiction, I argued (along with Friend) that reading a text is analogous to perceiving under a Gestalt in important respects. According to the Waltonian schema, outlined above, there is no worry about perceiving a single work of art under more than one Gestalt: 'A Brahms sonata might be heard simultaneously as a piece of music, a

sonata, a romantic work, and a Brahmsian work' (Walton 1970: 341). Along similar lines, there seems no reason why a text belonging to the category 'fiction' cannot be read at the same time as a text belonging to the category 'literature'. Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* may be read simultaneously as a work of literature, as a fiction, as autobiographical and as a Joycean work.

An initial concern is that while the Waltonian standard and contra-standard features used in Friend's account of fiction are descriptive rather than evaluative, 'literature' is often used as an evaluative term:

Fiction is a species of language use (applied to names, sentences and discourses) and is neutral as to value. Literature, even in the narrowest sense applied to imaginative and creative writing, is a kind of discourse, essentially valued, which affords and invites a distinctive kind of appreciation.

(Lamarque 2014: 69)

'Fiction' is subject to some evaluation on some occasions. Karl May was condemned when his novels set in the Wild West, and reputedly based on fact, were revealed as fiction. In this instance, the disappointment of many readers extended beyond disappointment at being hoodwinked to dissatisfaction at being left with 'mere fiction'. In another type of case, fiction may be criticised for containing factual inaccuracy. A novel set in Cambridge which contains the line 'I left Magdalene College and walked across the road to the Fitzwilliam Museum' contains a factual accuracy and one that would disturb a reader familiar with Cambridge's geography. Let us also imagine that this detail served no purpose in the novel so could not be excused as 'poetic license'. This type of case results in a kind of imaginative resistance, of a non-moral kind, which leads to a negative evaluation of the work. Genre convention plays a role in evaluation, which holds that if the novel is realist fiction and if a particular detail is wrong about the subject depicted then the novel may be criticised for containing an error. In this second example, the work is criticised for being 'too fictional' given the genre conventions of realist fiction.

Nevertheless, it is true that describing a work as a work of 'fiction' is not usually evaluative but the kind of categorisation publishers use to help readers distinguish what is invented from what is fact; for instance, to differentiate 'true crime' from 'detective fiction'. In contrast, calling a work 'literature' is predominantly evaluative and involves

some form of aesthetic appreciation. This kind of literary appreciation seems distinct from personal preference; I may recognise a Henry James novel as literature without the work being to my taste. The upshot of this brief discussion is that I am loath to dismiss the evaluative aspect of literature as it captures something of the Gestalt of reading a text as a work of literature.

The Waltonian schema captures the evaluative nature of literature in a way that avoids the pitfalls of any essentialist account. My argument is not that 'widespread positive critical acclaim' is a necessary condition on literature. For one thing a given work may be met initially with a frosty critical reception as was the case with F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. For another thing, works like Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* may be subject to only select positive critical acclaim. A standard feature of a literary work is not a necessary condition on literature. Standard and contra-standard features affect the experience of perceiving a work of art, in this case reading a text as literature. The kind of standard features characteristic of the category 'literature' include: technical skill exhibited by the author, consistent positive critical appraisal, an expectation on the reader's behalf that a greater degree of work is required than when reading genre fiction and that the text will explore some serious issues. Contra-standard features of literature include: clunking imagery and cliché as well as substantial tracts containing factual data. Variable features of literature, as with fiction, include the length or language of the script. Writing that is classed as 'literature' may be either fiction or non-fiction; the political speeches of Cicero or Burke are examples of literary non-fiction.

An anti-essentialist account of literature sketches vague boundaries which allow for peripheral cases to move between the categories of 'literature' and 'non-literature'. Two examples of such movement are 'ex-literature' and 'literature in the making'. Two cases of ex-literature, where a work once classed as 'literature' no longer enjoys this status, may be some plays by George Bernard Shaw and some poetry by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. These cases admit that readers might initially misjudge a work; all that initially glitters is not of a gold standard. There are also strong sociological and contextual elements in the categorisation of a work as 'literature'. Features that were deemed to be standard may, over time, turn into variable features. Romanticism may have once been taken as standard for literature, but dropped with the advent of modernism, thus romanticism now counts as a variable feature of literature. Further, the categorisation of a work as 'literature' may take

time to establish. Positive critical acclaim is a standard feature, though not a necessary condition, on a work being classed as 'literature'.

So far I have focussed on consistent positive critical appraisal as a standard feature of literature. Let us examine two more candidates. One way to progress is to ask what readers expect to find in a work of literature. Peter Lamarque, in a survey article on literature, says the following:

First, as with all art, a fundamental expectation regarding a literary work (treated as such) is that the parts cohere, more or less, into a unifying whole, that there is a design or purposiveness in the elements. Note that this does not rule out the avant-garde or 'nouveau roman', which rejects 'closure', and plays with disjointedness, for design can reside in apparent randomness. Second, it is expected, in line with the 'moral seriousness' requirement, that whatever the surface subject matter (narrative event or poetic metaphor) there will be underlying themes of a broadly human interest, indeed that reflection on the subject matter will elicit reflection, of an imaginative kind, on these broader themes. Third, there is an expectation that the work will reward a process of interpretation which reveals the literary interest in the work, notably by showing in detail how the themes are sustained or developed by the work's elements and design. Finally, the value of the work, as a literary work, will emerge as a function of the three other features, that is, in relation to the rewards delivered by the works in these respects.

(Lamarque 2013: 524)

Lamarque identifies: coherence, design, morally serious subject matter, being the subject of interest, reflection, interpretation and value as candidate features of literature. There may be other candidates for standard features of literature, innovation is one, but we shall spend the rest of this section making clear what is meant by a 'well written' and 'morally serious' text.

There are at least two important aspects to the judgement that 'literature is well written'. The first concerns what is typical of the kind of writing and the second, related claim, concerns a positive judgement on how the writing is executed. Unlike a shopping list, casual diary entry or betting slip a 'literary' text tends to be complex. One term that has

gained currency in the philosophy of literature is ‘thick narrative’.¹⁰ I shall adopt John Gibson’s use of ‘thick description’ to mean ‘possessing an especially rich kind of descriptive content’ (Gibson 2011: 75). A text is made thicker by the prevalence of literary and narrative devices which may include: symbolism, irony, metaphor and allusion. One might think of thick description in terms of a marginalia test: consider two descriptions ‘A’ and ‘B’. Description ‘A’ is thicker than description ‘B’ if a reader can spot more literary devices and annotate the margins of text ‘A’ with more comments. Literary and narrative devices in sufficient proliferation turn the text into what has been termed a ‘thick description’ or ‘thick narrative’.

There are no precise boundaries for literary or narrative devices (see the introduction to Chapter Four) and I should refer to specific texts in order to identify which devices have been used. Some thicker narratives will be richer in metaphors while others will not, hence ‘the presence of rich metaphor’ is a standard feature of a literary work but not a necessary condition. The exact number of such devices counts as a variable feature of literature as would word count. A predominance of such devices, however, enables us to recognise a narrative as thicker or richer and this feature of ‘thick description’ tends to be standard in literary works. A thin, less demanding narrative counts as contra-standard to literature. When I say that a thick narrative is ‘well written’ I praise the artistry of the author in his or her choosing the right turn of phrase, an apt image or metaphor.

Of course, some works of literature may consciously adopt a pared down counter-style with minimal literary and narrative devices. Raymond Carver, inspired by Hemingway, adopts such a style in his *What Do We Talk About When we Talk About Love?*¹¹ On the other side of the coin is Hugh Walpole whose works are full of literary devices but are, arguably, not literature. Both cases suggest that the judgement over whether a work is literature or not is not solely judged on the presence of literary devices. In the case of Carver, this something more seems to be a creative and effective artistry on the author’s behalf; so creative artistry may be added to our list of standard features of literature. The fact that there is more than one standard feature of literature does not weaken the anti-

¹⁰ Gilbert Ryle (1968, 2009) uses this term to describe action that involves more than bodily movement e.g. a wink to attract someone’s attention rather than because something has flown into your eye. Bernard Williams (2010) applies the term to concepts in ethics that carry both descriptive and evaluative meaning such as loyalty and gratitude. I use the term here in a different sense to describe a style of writing.

¹¹ For a discussion of Hemingway’s deliberate rejection of literary devices such as metaphor see (Lodge 1977:155-159).

essentialist case. It is still fair to say that greater complexity and the presence of literary devices is a standard but non-essential feature of literature.

Next, let us turn to what Lamarque terms ‘moral seriousness’. This candidate is a feature of the content of a literary work rather than a standard feature of literary style (such as the prevalence of figurative language). ‘Moral seriousness’ fits overtly moral themes such as remorse, revenge or retribution but the term ‘ethical seriousness’ is broader and covers all human thought and action.¹² The term ‘thematic seriousness’ widens the scope further and is in keeping with what Lamarque argues elsewhere.¹³ Thematic seriousness is still not a necessary condition on literature, but a standard feature, as there may be a literary text that is not thematically serious such as closely-observed nature poetry. Robert Stecker gives us an idea of the kind of perennially important issues discussed in literature: ‘Conceptions concerning self-knowledge and our knowledge of others, the emotions, the springs of action, the nature of perception, of personal identity, of free will or determinism, of society, of time to mention just a few...’ (Stecker 1997: 285).¹⁴ Thematic seriousness works alongside the thickness of description to help distinguish the literary case from the non-literary case, which in turn may be fictional or non-fictional. One would expect a work of literature to have both a rich, descriptive quality and be about a perennially serious theme, whereas one would expect a work of philosophy to have the latter but not the former. In contrast, we would expect neither an especially rich descriptive quality nor any serious comment from a work of genre fiction. A Mills and Boon romance tends not to explore the nature of love, and an Agatha Christie novel tends not to explore the nature of death, in any serious way. These kinds of read are primarily concerned with telling a story.

As a result, one can say that a trivial subject matter or mere story telling tends to be a contra-standard feature of a work of literature. Some works of literature, like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or *Tristram Shandy* might appear to be thematically trivial but reveal greater depth on closer analysis. On one level, the former text can stimulate reflection on the theme that biology is stronger than reason. There is a further category of works that are sometimes included in literary canons, owing to their being particularly well written though not about a serious theme; the gentle irony of P. G. Wodehouse’s *The Golf*

¹² See the discussion below in section (2.1) on ethical literary cognitivism, particularly the quotation from Iris Murdoch (1956: 39).

¹³ (Lamarque & Olsen 1994: 405).

¹⁴ Stecker advances a disjunctive account of literature (1996: 681-694) but is overly permissive in including the category of literature by association and his account leaves us wondering how we would recognise a work of literature as defined by his disjunction. One advantage of the Waltonian schema is being able to specify the standard features by which we can recognise a work as a work of literature.

Omnibus is an example. In the same way that one judges Mozart's string quartet in G major as fugal because there is a preponderance of standard features of a fugue present, so Wodehouse's use of language, that is, his turn of phrase in places, may justify a work being classed as 'literature' despite the general absence of serious themes. In order to counter the thesis about literature advanced so far, one would need to point to an example of a text which is not subject to positive critical appraisal, was not intended to be read as literature, is not well written or about a serious theme, but is nevertheless classed as literature. Here are two such potential cases which I shall, nevertheless, resist.

One example noted by Robert Stecker is 'literature by association', that is any writing by an especially talented author which lacks literary merit but may be of interest, for instance, in tracing the development of the author's thought.¹⁵ The classification 'literature by association' seems to use the term 'literature' in an honorific sense in the absence of standard features and in the presence of contra-standard features of literature. For these reasons 'literature by association' is incompatible with the account of literature advanced here; although I understand why these kinds of document may be of interest. A second example of a text that may exhibit some contra standard features of literature which are nevertheless classed as literature, are texts of cultural importance. One could imagine a work that is devoid of especially impressive narrative or literary techniques that is classed as literature because it is deemed of cultural importance; for example fragments of a play written in Cornish. Given that we do not have many plays written in Cornish, this is 'literary' in the sense of being a rich and interesting example within this genre. In this case the use of 'literature', like the category of 'literature by association', is too far removed from the sense of literary we seek to give an account of here. 'Literature' in these cases is equivalent to saying 'body of work'.¹⁶

The standard and contra-standard features distinguished above give us a sense of the common ground between works of literature. In the same way that the anti-essentialist account of fiction provides a means of recognising fiction, so an anti-essentialist account of literature provides a means of recognising literature. As a consequence, we are in a position to offer a Friend-type summary of literature:

¹⁵ The term 'literature by association' first appears in Hirsch, E. D. 'What isn't Literature?' in Hernandi, P. (ed.) 1978: *What is Literature?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

¹⁶ 'Children's literature' is a further example though is complicated by the fact that such a phrase may refer to fiction written for children that is deemed particularly good. Indeed there may be some standard features of good children's literature that are shared with literature intended for an older readership.

If we take a text to be literary, we shall expect it to have a careful arrangement of narrative and literary devices that contribute to greater complexity and coherence than in genre fiction, to engage the reader in a level of thoughtfulness about a perennially serious theme, to be the product of an author intending to write literature and to be read by those expecting to read literature. Such a work may be either fiction or non-fiction.

Before we leave the subject of literature, I should mention a disparaging sense of ‘literary’ which equates with ‘excessively elaborate’ or even ‘pretentious’. Literary devices are, according to this view, mere bells and whistles used to adorn a text. One version of this view is that such elaboration may be admired aesthetically while a less charitable version is that literary adornments act as a distraction to the substantive content of a text. The latter version is prominent in much analytic philosophy and sometimes comes under the name of ‘the fallacy of rhetoric’. The fallacy of rhetoric maintains that the use of literary devices has no bearing on either the truth or the validity of an argument. This fallacy may prove useful to those who are easily persuaded by the power of words but there are two potential pitfalls. The first is to assume that ‘the truth and validity of an argument’ is the only cognitive potential available. Secondly, it is a bad inference to say that ‘there are some distracting literary devices so the use of all literary devices is distracting in communicating cognitive gain’. Literary devices may be illuminating rather than distracting and can form an integral part of a text rather than a mere adornment. The portrayal of Cordelia as a Christ figure in *King Lear* isn’t a pretention on the part of the playwright but rather a sophisticated characterisation of a key figure in this work. In this case the use of a literary device acts as a bell and whistle only in alerting the reader to issues of significant textual analysis. I do not find any disparaging account of the literary useful in determining what we mean by calling a text ‘literary’. Let us move on to examine the relation between fiction and literature in the category ‘literary fiction’.

1.3 Literary Fiction

This chapter began by drawing attention to the widespread slippage between the categories of literature and fiction. So far, we have attempted to get a conceptual grip on these concepts by using Walton’s account of genre, as suggested by Friend. Walton’s model of

classification allows for a work to be seen in more than one category. This is the case with works of literary fiction which can be read in more than one category: as literature and as fiction. Literary fiction includes the set of works that exhibit the standard features of both literature and fiction and lack the contra-standard features of literature and fiction. For instance, *Anna Karenina* is an artfully constructed narrative, is thematically serious, subject to widespread positive critical acclaim, features made up characters and does not persistently communicate facts about the world and as such may be judged as a work of literary fiction. The category of literary fiction occupies the intersection between the set of works that are fiction and the set of works that are literature, and as such is a subgenre of both fiction and literature. I want to finish this chapter with two suggestions as to the implications of what has been argued. The first implication is a rejection of the view that literary fiction is a sub-genre of fiction in an equivalent way as erotica or sci-fi. The second implication is a re-organisation of arguments in the literary cognitivism, anti-cognitivism and non-cognitivism debate according to whether each argument concerns literary fiction qua literature or literary fiction qua fiction.

First, a note on the terminology: ‘genre’, ‘super-genre’ and ‘sub-genre’. The term ‘genre’ is used in various senses: we may speak of fiction as one artistic genre among many, ‘crime’, or ‘sci-fi’ as distinct genres of fiction, and ‘literary fiction’ as a further genre. On every account (Walton’s, Friend’s, and the above), there is a hierarchy of genres. To clarify the nature of this hierarchy, my proposal is that there are four ‘super-genres’: fiction, non-fiction, literature and non-literature where the first and third category overlap to form an intersection termed ‘literary fiction’. The super-genre of fiction may be further sub-divided into many kinds, commonly referred to as ‘genres’, such as: crime, sci-fi, romance. As these categories are sub-divisions of fiction, I shall refer to them as ‘sub-genres’. I shall, therefore, maintain a distinction between the super-genre of fiction and sub-genres such as crime or romance. The fact that in popular usage ‘genre’ is the term used to refer to all these categories only muddies the river.

The label ‘literary fiction’ tends to be counted as a sub-genre alongside other sub-genres. For example, Lamarque says the following:

Not all works of the imagination are deemed to be ‘literature’ ... and much popular fiction or drama or light verse would not be so classified. Publishers have even come to recognise a particular genre of fiction as ‘literary fiction’, in contrast to

other genres, crime, fantasy, horror, war, science fiction, which are rarely classed as 'literature'. What these other genres are thought to lack, as well as 'fine writing,' is a kind of moral seriousness which is taken as a further essential mark of 'imaginative literature'.

(Lamarque 2013: 521)

This categorisation requires refinement in light of what has been argued above. Literary fiction cannot be an equivalent sub-genre to crime fiction as the latter can be either of a literary or non-literary nature. So a distinction must be recognised between 'literary crime fiction' and 'non-literary crime fiction'. The distinction between 'literary' and 'non-literary' applies to all sub-genres of fiction such as: works of eighteenth century fiction, fictional works by A.S. Byatt, romantic or science fictions.

Awarding the status of 'literary' to a fiction refines the categorisation of that fiction. In recent years, the works of Philip K. Dick, J.G. Ballard and Kurt Vonnegut have been re-categorised as literary fiction from science fiction; these works are literary science fictions. It is worth noting in passing, however, that in practice 'literary fiction' may occupy a separate section in a library or bookshop, variously called: 'literary fiction', 'literature' or 'classics', which makes the category appear an equivalent sub-division to 'crime fiction' and the like. Instead, the term 'literary fiction' refers to a set of texts taken from various sub-genres of fiction which exhibit the standard features of literature and lack the contra-standard features of literature. Our account of literariness in terms of standard features does not impose any a priori limitations on which sub-genres of fiction yield literary works. Admittedly, it may be more difficult to write a work of literary merit if one's agenda is to write a thriller full of suspense or a titillating work of erotic fiction, yet there are examples; Umberto Eco set himself the task of writing a thriller of literary worth in *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*, and Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye* counts as an example of literary erotic fiction.

The second implication has direct bearing on this project but can only be sketched briefly here. There is disagreement over whether literary fiction has cognitive gain (this is still a placeholder term). Three positions are distinguishable in the debate: the view that literary fiction affords cognitive gain (literary cognitivism), the view that it does not (literary anti-cognitivism) and the view that whether it does or does not is irrelevant to the status of literary fiction as literary fiction (literary non-cognitivism). Given what is argued above, it

is incumbent on anyone defending any position to specify whether an argument over literary fiction applies to literary fiction as literature, as fiction or both. For instance, some cognitivists may want to defend the cognitive value of literary fiction as fiction by drawing a parallel between what is learnt from reading some genre fiction and what is gained from entertaining a thought experiment in philosophy.¹⁷ Another cognitivist may want to defend the cognitive power of literary fiction as literature by focussing on literary language.¹⁸ Discussion of the fictional status of literary fiction predominates in the literary cognitivist debate though, as we shall see in the next section, literariness is a constant but undeveloped theme. In upshot, further work needs to be carried out in order to re-organise arguments in the literary cognitivism, anti-cognitivism and non-cognitivism debate according to the conceptual delineation set out above.

In sum, I have defended Friend's claim that 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' are categories defined in terms of standard and contra-standard features. Fiction may be further divided into sub-genres such as crime fiction, science fiction or romantic fiction. I have made the case that 'literature' and 'non-literature' are super-genres which are also best accounted for in terms of standard and contra-standard features. Literature may be further divided into literary fiction and literary non-fiction. Hence there is an intersection between the categories of fiction and literature which is known as 'literary fiction'. Works that are classed in any of the distinguishable genres of fiction, such as science fiction, can be categorised as literary fiction as long as the work exhibits some standard features and lack of contra-standard features of literature. Literary fiction as a sub-genre of literature and of fiction entails that literary fiction stands in a different relation to fiction than genres such as romance or crime. One further implication is that cognitivist, anti-cognitivist and non-cognitivist arguments applied to literary fiction need to specify whether the argument applies to literary fiction as literature or as fiction.

¹⁷ A summary of this kind of argument may be found in (Davies 2007: 157-163).

¹⁸ For instance (Nussbaum 1992: 154-157).

Chapter Two: Literary Cognitivism, Anti-cognitivism and Non-cognitivism

The aesthetician Peter Kivy once recalled an incident from his childhood when, ill in bed and listening to a soap opera on the radio, his mother entered the room and threw a copy of *Les Misérables* at him rebuking ‘For God’s sake improve your mind!’ This is a basic expression of literary cognitivism, which is the view that reading a work of literary fiction will help the reader develop cognitively. I shall call those who are sceptical of the claim that a work of literary fiction will improve the reader’s mind ‘literary anti-cognitivists’. Further, I shall term those who think that any cognitive improvement from literary fiction is irrelevant to the appreciation of literary fiction ‘literary non-cognitivists’. In the course of this chapter I want to explore how the distinction drawn in the first chapter between literary fiction as fiction and literary fiction as literature applies to the three positions in turn. This chapter starts by examining what is meant by literary cognitivism in more detail before drawing attention to the fact that all of the mainstream strands of literary cognitivism attribute some role to the reader engaging with literary devices yet do not account for such a role in any substantial way. Subsequent chapters attend to this omission. I also want to show that literary anti-cognitivism is fundamentally a sceptical position. Finally, I shall reject the literary non-cognitivist position and attempt to show that cognitive engagement can and does contribute to the aesthetic appreciation of a text.

2.1 LITERARY COGNITIVISM

The question ‘Can one gain cognitively from reading literary fiction?’ is an enduring question in aesthetics. This endurance is, in part, down to the imprecise way the question is formulated. What does it mean to say that literature ‘improves your mind’ or ‘gets you somewhere cognitively’? The question of cognitive gain from the literary arts demands answers to two important questions:

- (a) What exactly is the cognitive gain in question?
- (b) What aspects of literary fiction are we referring to when we claim that literary fiction is able or not able to provide cognitive gain?

To declare my convictions from the start, I believe ‘understanding’ is the most promising candidate that fits the cognitive gain on offer (I elaborate on exactly which senses of understanding are pertinent in Chapter Three). Like most cognitivists I make a hedged sufficiency claim that literary fiction *may* stimulate cognitive gain. This sufficiency claim need not lessen the significance of the cognitive boon which is often referred to as a significant, even life changing, reward. Unlike most literary cognitivists, I shall argue that the reader’s engagement with literary devices such as metaphor, symbolism and irony does important work in stimulating the reader’s understanding. Let us start with a brief, critical introduction to the cognitivist tradition in aesthetics before we examine the variety of literary cognitivist accounts on offer.

What is literary cognitivism?

Full dress definitions of aesthetic cognitivism are thin on the ground but Cynthia Freeland offers the criteria set out below. These criteria provide a useful starting point for a discussion of literary cognitivism.

- 1) Artworks stimulate cognitive activity that may teach us about the world. Some say artworks do this because they have representational (including expressive) content; others, because they function as symbols within a diversely structured system.
- 2) The cognitive activity they stimulate is part and parcel of their functioning as artworks.
- 3) As a result of this stimulation, we learn from artworks: we acquire fresh knowledge, our beliefs are refined, and our understanding is deepened.
- 4) What we learn in this manner constitutes one of the main reasons we enjoy and value artworks in the first place.

(Freeland 1997: 19)

Freeland says in statement (1) that ‘artworks stimulate cognitive activity’. One advantage of this formulation is that it allows the *discussion* surrounding the artwork to count as potentially part of the cognitive gain. In my experience this is a significant part of finding literary fiction of cognitive benefit. The exact nature of the ‘cognitive activity that may teach us about the world’ referred to in statement (1) requires clarification and some suggestions are made as to the cognitive activity in statement (3). Of course, ‘cognitive

activity that may teach us about the world' applies to all sorts of things that do not count as art. So we need to add, as Freeland does in statements (1-2), that the gain is a gain from artworks functioning as artworks.

Freeland has all art forms in mind and not just the literary (I suggested what one might mean by 'literary' in Chapter One). So how distinctive does the cognitive gain from literary fiction need to be? It is likely given certain similarities between artistic media, representation and symbolism (from statement 1) that there are points of contact between literary fiction and other art forms. As a result, I do not need to commit to an exclusivist view that reading literary fiction is the *only* way to achieve the relevant cognitive gain. However, I have no ambition to defend the cognitive value of painting, sculpture, music, architecture, film, dance and so forth and am only interested in the literary arts here: plays, poems and literary prose (novels and short stories). The interesting contrast is not between literature and other art forms but between art that leads to cognitive gain and art that does not. In particular, I am interested in what common features of the literary arts generate cognitive gain.

I may not be an exclusivist when it comes to cognitive activity stimulated from reading literary fiction but I should still like to champion the advantages of reading literary fiction over other art forms in the context of the particular form of cognitive development distinguished later on (section 3.3). My argument rests on the proliferation of devices such as metaphor, irony and symbolism in literary fictional texts but I need a great deal longer to make the case that literary devices stimulate cognitive activity. For now, I shall draw the reader's attention to some advantages of literary fiction based on the pragmatics of engagement with literary fiction over other art forms. While it is standard practice to watch a film all the way through, it is not standard practice to read a novel in one sitting. This allows the reader more thinking time while engaging with the relevant literary text. The fact that literature is communicated through the written word, and less often through the spoken word, must dictate some parameters. Freeland remains open to the idea that non-linguistic art forms can share the same cognitive potential as the linguistic (1997: 31-32). I am not convinced that this is the case. I may, for instance, gain cognitively from a critical engagement with some of Bob Dylan's lyrics but this seems to work, in many cases, independent of the accompanying music and delivery. In fact the music and delivery may distract and so impede my reflection on what is stated.¹⁹ Further, I am not clear how the

¹⁹ There is a separate critical literature on this issue, which is beyond the scope of this project in: Kivy, P. (1988) *Osmín's Rage* London: Cornell University Press and Bicknell, J. 2009: *Why Music Moves Us* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

plastic arts could feature literary devices like alliteration or dance take on the form of a sonnet. If, on occasion, a distinctive cognitive benefit is to be found through engaging with these literary devices, as I go on to argue in Chapter Four, and if other art forms do not possess such devices, then one must conclude that these other art forms cannot convey this specific cognitive gain in the same way as the literary arts.

So while some cognitive benefits of literature may be shared between literature and other things (film, gossip or hip hop), literature is a particularly significant source of cognitive benefits. This gives me a way to reject the observation that popular culture is just as effective (or perhaps more effective) at encouraging the kind of thoughtfulness that I have in mind: that *EastEnders* makes me think about revenge in as illuminating a way as *Titus Andronicus*. I believe that popular culture can be cognitively rewarding but maintain that literature has an advantage which I shall explain in the course of the next three chapters.

The third criterion in Freeland's list above suggests three main candidates for the 'cognitive activity' referred to in the opening statement: gaining fresh knowledge, refining one's belief, and deepening one's understanding. Earlier in the paper Freeland offers a further list of cognitive advancement, typical of literary cognitivists, to include '...understanding, insight, empathy, imagination, the creation and discovery of new perceptual schemas, new worlds, or new relationships among things' (Freeland 1997: 13). This leaves us with a plethora of candidate notions which work in different ways. For example, learning *p* need not entail knowing *p*. I can learn to love pastrami or learn the false belief that the 'moon is the same size as the sun' where my learning these things does not count as knowledge. Conversely, knowing *p* does not entail learning *p*. I know that eggs are eggs, how I feel and how to breathe without learning these things. It is not clear what the relations are between learning something, acquiring knowledge, refining beliefs and deepening understanding. So Freeland's statement (3) is a wholesale invitation to do some epistemology; my focus is on what it is for a reader to develop and deepen understanding (section 3.2).

Criterion (4) states an implication of cognitivism, namely that cognitive gain increases our appreciation of art. Nothing about the claim that we may learn from the arts hangs on the claim that we value the arts because of such a cognitive benefit but I shall address this issue in section (2.3) as the view has provoked significant attention, most notably in the work of Peter Lamarque. For now let us leave Freeland's account which has provided a useful prompt for discussion and turn to the variety of literary cognitivist accounts on offer.

We have filled out our initial definition of literary cognitivism as ‘improving one’s mind’ by examining how Freeland’s four statements above apply in the literary case. Next, I would like to look at whether the promised ‘cognitive activity’, which we shall take to be ‘a better understanding’, is developed by reading literary fiction as fiction or as literature. Next, I argue that both thought experiments in philosophy or science and counterfactual histories share the standard features of fiction, and provide cognitive gain so there are some forms of fiction that stimulate cognitive gain. However, I go on to suggest that the cognitive gain from literary fiction as literature is a more compelling source of cognitive gain than the cognitive gain from fiction and one that is underrepresented so worth further discussion.

To recapitulate, the opening chapter established that we recognise a work as fiction according to certain standard features including the use of ‘once upon a time’, first or third person narration, the absence of facts and footnotes, substantial tracts in the work that are made up and poetic licence. There are, in addition, contextual standard features which are derived from the circumstances surrounding a text. For instance, fiction tends to be written by an author who intended the work to be read as fiction. In contrast, we recognise a work as literature according to a different set of standard features: we expect a literary text to have a careful arrangement of narrative and literary devices that contribute to a greater complexity and coherence than in genre fiction. We also expect a literary text to engage the reader in a level of thoughtfulness about a perennially serious theme, to be the product of an author intending to write literature and to be read by those expecting to read literature. Literary works may be either fiction or non-fiction.

A thought experiment in philosophy or science is defined by one epistemologist as ‘...a process of reasoning carried out within the context of a well-articulated imaginary scenario in order to answer a specific question about a non-imaginary scenario’ (Gendler 2010: 56). As such, thought experiments share many of the standard features of fiction: the reader is required to entertain an imaginary scenario where the author intends the scenario to be read as fiction and not to be read as fact. Likewise, fiction and counterfactual history share many standard features; most notably that both are the product of the author’s imagination, are intended to be read as such and are not to be taken as true though they may bear factual content. When I imagine what would have had to happen for the Allies to lose the Second World War then I use my imagination, do not take this counterfactual history as factually

true but consider some relevant facts. So thought experiments and counterfactual history share many of the same features as fiction, but what of the cognitive gain?

There are many different types of ‘well-articulated imaginary scenarios’ that bear cognitive advantage. Thought experiments in science tend to take a deductive form, as in the case of Galileo’s famous paradox of the cannon ball and the musket ball (a clear account of this thought experiment is given in Gendler 1998: 402-403). There are thought experiments in philosophy that follow a deductive structure; Gettier-type counter examples invite the thought experimenter to think of a case of justified true belief that does not count as knowledge (e.g. Dancy 1985: 27). In these cases, the thought experiment presents a transparent exception to a previously held rule or definition. Other thought experiments tease out our intuitions and in so doing enable the thought experimenter to determine how such intuitions may run contrary to his or her normal behaviour or views (e.g. the experience machine thought experiment in Nozick 1974: 42-45). In a third case, the cognitive gain of conceivability thought experiments rests on whether the thought experimenter *succeeds* in entertaining a fiction. Conceivability is generally taken to mean the establishment of something that cannot be known to be false a priori, that is to say p is conceivable if and only if not-p cannot be ruled out a priori (e.g. the existence of zombies in Chalmers 1996: 94). In each case, whether the cognitive gain from the thought experiment relies on deduction, intuition or conceivability, the philosophical imagination gets to work on conceiving a fictional scenario and as a result the thought experimenter sees something in clearer terms. The role of thought experiments in our gaining knowledge is a subject for further discussion but I shall buy into a general optimism along with others writing on this subject (Sorensen 1992:109, 135-141; Davies 2007: 157-163).

As regarding counterfactual history, Niall Ferguson offers a ‘double rationale for counterfactual analysis’ in his *Virtual History* (Ferguson 2011: 87). Firstly, one understands the significance of an event better by imagining what would have happened if the event had not taken place. Some seminal histories use counterfactual history to this cognitive end; for instance, Robert Fogel in his *Railroads and American Economic Growth* (1964) and his *Time on the Cross* (1974). Secondly, one gains by imagining oneself in the decision-making process, entertaining ‘all the possibilities which contemporaries contemplated before the fact...’ Both advantages rely on the historian’s prior knowledge which is fed into his or her contemplation of the counterfactual scenario but rely crucially

on the historian entertaining a fictional state of affairs so counterfactual histories count as a case of cognitive gain based on fiction.

The opening chapter asked the literary cognitivist to specify whether a reader learns from a work of literary fiction as fiction, as literature, or both and if both how literary features stand in relation to fictional features. So far we have shown that some fictions, thought experiments and counterfactual histories, allow the reader to develop cognitively. There is no reason why reading literary fiction cannot convey the same cognitive benefits from those outlined above. For example, D. H. Lawrence's short story, which describes a child successfully tipping horses while in a trance, may be used as a Gettier type counter example (this example is cited in Sorensen 1992: 222-223). I may use Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* as a prompt to tease out my intuitions on human organ donation. Thirdly, I may cite Rat in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* as inconceivable in so far as nothing can be both small enough to escape down a burrow and at the same time be large enough to picnic on a chicken, row a boat and fire a pistol. In these cases I use literary fiction qua fiction to accrue the same cognitive benefits as thought experiments in philosophy. When Gaut admits that '...literature can share these goals in prescribing imaginings, and it too can be subject to the norms of imagining comprehensively, vividly, unsentimentally, and with fidelity to how things might be' he is considering literary fiction under the concept of fiction (Gaut 2007: 152-153). The relevant cognitive gain, shared by thought experiments and literary fiction as fiction, can be achieved without the reader engaging with features standard to literature. Martha Nussbaum draws our attention to the lack of literary features on the part of philosophical thought experiments in her *Love's Knowledge* (for example Nussbaum 1990: 46). Plato sets up the contrast between the man who seems just but who is unjust and the man who seems unjust but who is just in only a few lines (*Republic* 360e-362c) and without any of the literary effects of Jane Austen's description of Mr. Wickham and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. I want to investigate what literariness adds to cognitive gain.

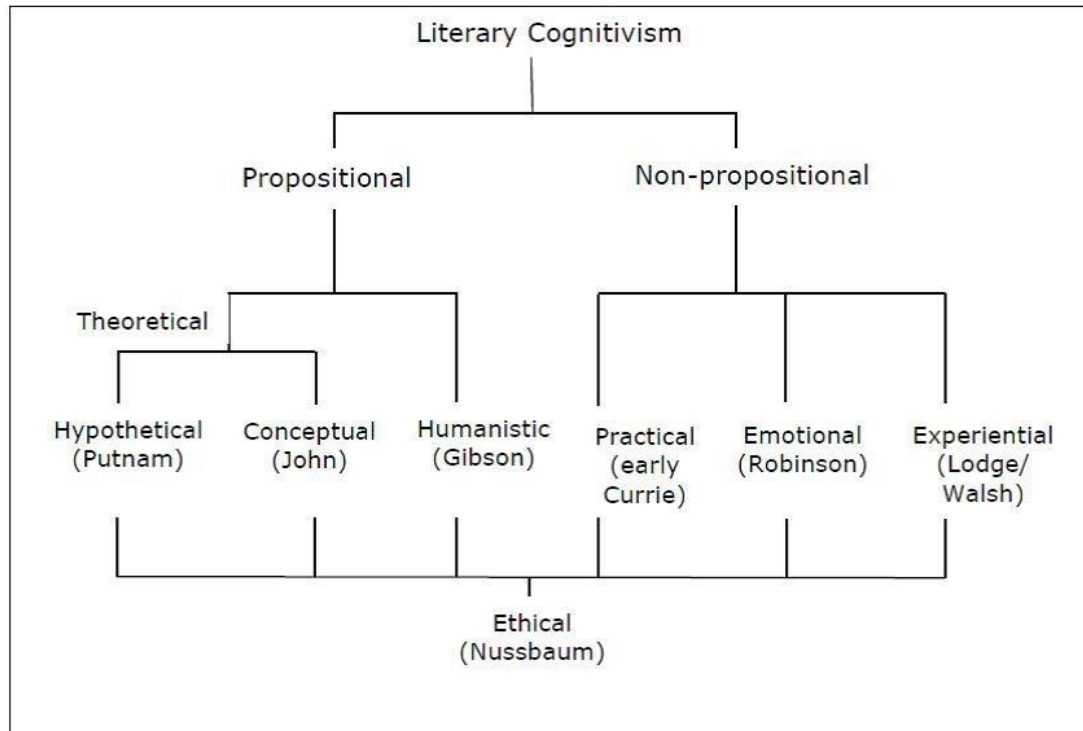
One might object at this point that it is possible to gain cognitively from literary fiction in some other way than from reading literary fiction as fiction or as literature. Let us put to one side any facts *about* the work; for instance my knowing that *Hamlet* has five acts. This kind of cognitive gain, tested in rudimentary literature examinations, is irrelevant here. For the same reason we may legitimately overlook the reader's accruing facts from fiction. I may learn certain aspects of medieval history from Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*

given that the author is accurate in his account of events such as the Inquisition in the Occitan. There may be some propositions in literary fiction that merit belief because we recognise that we are intended to believe them, seem plausible (as part of a well-researched historical novel) and may subsequently be validated. Learning facts from fiction is a cognitive gain but not the sort of gain that is subject to the controversy under discussion.

A third option gaining favour is that the cognitive reward at stake is generated from the fact that the fiction is a good story. Think of how our ancestors communicated to each other through story telling around the clan fire in the Pleistocene; a residue of these kinds of stories may be found in Ted Hughes's *How the Whale Became and Other Stories*. This third claim has recently been defended by Kivy ('Knowledge and novel knowledge: *quelle différence?*' forthcoming) but has a longer history (e.g. Bettelheim 1975). Three different claims about cognitive gain may be made in this context: that we learn a new story, that we learn a new story that is especially thought provoking, or that skilled story tellers provoke their audience to further reflection. The first claim is banal while the second and third claims point to features standard in literature; namely that it is a standard feature of literature to raise serious themes and that it is a standard feature of literature to be well written. Bettelheim says in his introduction to *The Uses of Enchantment*: 'The fairy tale could not have its psychological impact on the child were it not first and foremost a work of art' (1975: 12) and 'only the story itself permits an appreciation of its poetic qualities, and with it an understanding of how it enriches a responsive mind' (1975: 19). It is incumbent on the cognitivist defending the cognitive benefits of literary fiction qua story to make it explicit what it is about serious, well written stories that stimulates cognitive gain. Is it a matter of form or content or something else? I attempt to answer this question in my investigation into literary devices so there is no merit in following the story-telling aspects of literary fiction further.

Versions of literary cognitivism

So far I have referred to 'literary cognitivists' in general. It is time to get specific in order to give an accurate survey of the variety of positions on offer. One can outline the main positions diagrammatically:



No position is bold enough to say that a particular cognitive gain is the sole boon achieved from reading literary fiction. The nature of the cognitive reward depends on the particular work and there is a great deal of variety amongst literary fictional texts. So while one poem may explore a concrete scenario, another piece may invite more abstract reflection. Such variety runs contrary to essentialism and cognitivists make mention of multiple gains:

What literary art presents is designed to elicit a full response, sensuous, intellectual, and emotional, not separated but interfused.

(Walsh 1969:138)

Not only does fiction impart knowledge of the real world, we are told, but it helps us to understand and come to terms with what would otherwise be baffling. It imparts insights, skills, and values of one sort or another, and in so doing helps us to see the world differently.

(Novitz 1987: 118)

Nevertheless, five main tensions exist between the various cognitive theses identified in the diagram above:

- Whether the cognitive gain is propositional or non-propositional
- Whether the cognitive gain refers to the specifics of a situation or makes an abstract comment
- Whether the cognitive gain is classed as knowledge or classed as a cognitive advantage other than knowledge
- Whether the cognitive gain is theoretical or practical
- Whether the cognitive gain is predominantly from literary fiction as fiction or from literary fiction as literature.

A full discussion of each is beyond the scope of this project and I am interested in pursuing the road least travelled in taking the final tension, between fiction and literature, as the focus for what follows.

Let us examine each position to determine whether the source of cognitive gain is fiction, literature or both.

Hypothetical literary cognitivism

Hypothetical literary cognitivism is the view that we gain hypothetical knowledge from reading literary fiction. Putnam's cognitivist claim (1978) is that the gain from literary fiction is a theoretical knowledge of possibilities which is a kind of a priori knowledge:

What I learn is to see the world as it looks to someone who is sure that hypothesis is correct. I see what plausibility that hypothesis has; what it would be like if it *were* true; how someone could possibly think that it *is* true. But all this is still not empirical knowledge. Yet it is not correct to say that it is not knowledge at all; for being aware of a new interpretation of the facts, however repellent, of a construction that can – I now see – be put upon the facts, however perversely – is a kind of knowledge. It is knowledge of a possibility. It is *conceptual* knowledge.

(Putnam 1978: 90)

Putnam locates his discussion in the realm of moral value: Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* is cited as an example. This novel explores the moral complexities of being a woman with a social conscience in the twentieth century as '...might have been felt by one perfectly possible person in a perfectly definite period' (Putnam 1978: 91). Knowledge of possibilities should not be dismissed as mere passive recognition of what could be the case. Putnam draws an analogy between a thoughtful reader of fiction and a mountain climber entertaining possible routes to a summit, in so far as both plan, re-enact and review in light of foreseen impediments (Putnam 1978: 85-86). Knowledge of possibilities extends to the reader's thoughtful engagement with what motivates a particular view and what such a view is like for the person adopting it.

There is a role for literary devices in Putnam's cognitivism. For instance, Putnam attributes some role for vivid imagery, rich detail and play with perspective when he says:

...literature often puts before us both extremely vividly and in extremely rich emotional detail why and how this seems to be so in different societies, in different times, and from different perspectives.

(Putnam 1978: 87)

In a reply to an early draft of Nussbaum's paper 'Flawed Crystals' Putnam argues that fiction and commentary on fiction should not be conflated. He maintains that it is the latter which shows some promise in being able to bridge the gap between the literary arts and moral philosophy as some commentaries on fiction require a further commentary from moral philosophy (1983: 199-200). So, in conclusion, hypothetical literary cognitivism is primarily based on a fiction that stimulates a reader to imagine what a world view might be but allows for a further role to be attributed to features standard in literature such as the presence of literary devices and critical commentary.

Conceptual literary cognitivism is the view that we can gain conceptual knowledge from reading literary fiction. Eileen John seeks to explain how it is that: ‘Our response to a work of fiction can involve the pursuit of conceptual knowledge, where that pursuit is one form of philosophical activity’ (John 1998: 331). A literary fictional work may encourage the reader to ask: what do we mean by this concept? Imagine someone getting interested in philosophy through reading literary fiction that deals with issues such as respect for life, honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, suffering, freedom or dignity. The themes explored in literary fiction do not have to be overtly moral and may cover memories of a lost age or the exploration of a particular interest or passion. In the second half of John’s paper the following passage from *Fiction, Truth and Literature* is quoted directly and shows that there is agreement between Lamarque and Olsen (non-cognitivists) and John (cognitivist) that fiction *can* help think of previously unthought of scenarios and so help broaden the reader’s conceptual repertoire:

...although we acknowledged in discussing the fictive stance that entertaining propositions in works of fiction and engaging imaginatively with them might help to extend conceptual resources – thinking *of* things previously unthought in ways previously untried – there is not much beyond this that the distinctively literary qualities of a work can add; in other words there is no specific aesthetic contribution to the idea of conceptual enrichment which is not already present in any activity where new situations are brought to mind.

(Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 380-381 italics in original)

What is at stake, and hence is one of John’s targets, is whether literary fiction as literature can add to conceptual engagement. In the passage quoted the co-authors take ‘literary’ as a synonym for ‘aesthetic’ and we should place this to one side until section (2.3) below. I am interested in how John defends the cognitive, not aesthetic, power of literature and its capacity to enhance the reader’s conceptual resources.

John attributes a significant role to the literary features of literary fictional works when she says contra Lamarque and Olsen:

On the one hand, it does not bother me to say that literature is in the same boat with anything that stimulates us cognitively in this way. But on the other hand, I take a

work's ability to function in this way as contributing to its literary value, and I see the literary, aesthetic qualities of a work as contributing to its conceptually illuminating role.

(John 1998: 343)

According to John, reading literary fiction demands an active engagement with the subject matter. At least four arguments are employed to this end towards the end of John's paper (1998: 344-345): characterisation demands serious attention in literary fiction, full and compelling narrative context is helpful to cognitive ends, the reader of literary fiction is encouraged to look for evidence and justification and, lastly, tracing connections within the work works to cognitive advantage.

In her treatment of Grace Paley's short story 'Wants' John draws our attention to the writer's use of ambiguity. The word 'want' appears repeatedly and '...can be read both in terms of wanting as desiring and wanting as lacking' (John 1998: 337). Further the symbolism of the sycamore trees is identified by John as playing particular significance in our understanding the character's state of mind, for instance '...by showing that she is open and responsive to signs of flourishing' (1998: 344). For John, these cases of ambiguity and symbolism '...trigger thoughts that are relevant to conceptual questions' (1998: 345). So John defends the role that interpretation of a literary source plays in the reader's cognitive process: 'the project of questioning, interpreting, and judging the nature of the characters or the events in a work of fiction is a central literary project...' (1998: 332).

Humanistic literary cognitivism

Humanistic literary cognitivism is the view that we gain knowledge of how people live and interact through reading literary fiction '...that literature presents the reader with an intimate and intellectually significant engagement with social and cultural reality' (Gibson 2007: 2).²⁰ In contrast to the more theoretical approaches offered by Putnam and John, the literary humanist tradition within literary cognitivism acknowledges that literature grows out of a given culture and that reading that culture's literature allows us to learn about

²⁰ Gibson discusses the problem of how literary fiction qua literature and qua fiction can ever inform the reader about the actual world (2007: 37, 58) which is my theme for the final chapter.

actual human belief and action (Novitz 1987; Gibson 2007; Gaskin 2013; Harrison 2015). Travellers seeking to gain a better understanding of their host nation may choose to read that nation's literature.

Richard Gaskin makes the link between literary fiction and the world explicit in the following summary of literary humanism:

- (i) all works of literature constitutively bear on the world by virtue of employing terms that refer to real (principally universal, but also sometimes individual) entities;
- (ii) additionally, all works of literature constitutively bear on the world by virtue of making, or implying, true or false (principally general, but also sometimes particular) statements about the world;
- (iii) some works of literature have cognitive value in the sense that, of the true statements that these works make or imply, some can be known to be true, and of these knowable statements some are worth knowing;
- (iv) having cognitive value, in the sense of (i)-(iii), is essential to the aesthetic value of some works of literature.

(Gaskin 2013: 63)

For Gaskin, 'literature' provides 'one mode of access to reality' (2013: 284-285). The meaning of literature is fixed at the time of production and refers to the world in a way that may be judged as either true or false. The significant number of true statements in literature contributes to the reader's cognitive gain and in so doing enhances the readers' aesthetic experience.

There is not a prominent role for literary fiction as *fiction* in Gaskin's account. Fictions are fictionalised descriptions of reality, akin to our relaying of actual events but where the names and certain details are changed. These descriptions of fictionalised realities contrast with more imaginative fictions, perhaps one might refer to this category as 'fantasy', where every aspect of the story is invented. Post-colonial readings of *The Tempest* argue that the fictionalised dynamic between colonisers and colonised of the island inform us about the same dynamic outside the fiction; while the character of Ariel, 'an airy spirit', remains in the realm of fantasy.

There is disagreement between Gibson and Gaskin over the role of literariness with the former attributing more of a role to the literariness of literary fiction than the latter (cf.

Gaskin 2013: 125). Gibson argues that literary language is important in generating cognitive effect in his example from *Othello* (2007: 73-80) where three metaphors prominent in the play help the reader towards a better understanding of racism: ‘an old Black ram is tupping your white ewe’ (I.1.87-90), ‘you’ll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse’ (I.1.110-13), ‘your daughter, and the Moor, are now making the beast with two backs’ (I.1.115). For Gibson, literary *fiction* corresponds to the world beyond the fiction in an informative way and a contrived and carefully manipulated *literary* fiction is able to draw the reader’s attention to aspects of the world. However, there is only a thin account based on examples of how literary fiction as literature can help the reader gain a better understanding of the world.

Practical literary cognitivism

Practical literary cognitivism is the view that we can gain a skill or competence as a result of reading literary fiction. Candidate notions for this practical gain are legion, I shall focus on close reading later (section 3.3), but the ability to use our imagination is a favoured choice. Gregory Currie (1998) defended this line earlier in his career when he made the case that literary fiction provides a fitting, though not exclusive medium, to practise planning and reviewing our decision-making, mainly moral decision-making, through the entertaining of imaginary scenarios. The kind of planning involved in preparing for an interview or settling on the most effective strategy to ask someone out for a date are context dependent and suit a practical rather than theoretical model. Literary fiction as fiction plays a crucial role in exercising the imagination to enable the person imagining to practise skills that prove useful in non-imaginary scenarios. While it is possible that these practical responses may be rehearsed on scenarios that are actual but distant, the imaginary scenarios provided by fictional works are a convenient method to achieve the same reward.

Currie does not make explicit reference to the role of literary devices in his 1998 paper but there is evidence that literary devices play some role in determining what counts as a ‘good fiction’ or competent story telling. For instance, in (1998: 170-171) there is mention of ‘crucial junctures in narration’, ‘a well-made narrative, with illuminating commentary’ and the complexity of a given text. At the end of the paper Currie mentions the role of literary criticism when he says ‘the successful critic can help us rise to the imaginative occasion of the work, or else alert us to its spurious message’ (1998: 178). It is not made clear enough

how literary qualities of a ‘well-made narrative’ helps. I shall argue that it is the literariness of literary fiction that proves crucial in developing another set of skills associated with close reading.

Emotional literary cognitivism

Emotional literary cognitivism is the view that reading literary fiction can inform us about our own and other people’s emotional lives. This thesis runs contrary to the idea that genuine cognitive gain can only be: reasoned, explicit, clear, objective and unemotional. Emotional literary cognitivism takes the dichotomy between reason and emotion as false (Goodman 1976: 245-252; Damasio 1994: 139; Elgin 2008: 33-49) and in so doing allows the suggestive, opaque, open, personal style of writing prominent in literary fiction, to carry potential cognitive worth. To bring up the issue of emotion and cognitive gain from the arts is, of course, to catch a tiger by the tail and there is much to discuss. I shall limit my discussion to whether literary fiction as fiction or as literature has the more important role in emotional literary cognitivism and come down on the side of the latter. The reader may be informed about and by emotion in a number of different ways and I suggest the following three candidates.

First, the reader is able to gain some knowledge of what it is like to experience an emotion, perhaps where a rare or complex emotion has not been experienced before. Damasio cites as an example ‘why Lady Macbeth should experience ecstasy as she leads her husband into a murderous rampage’ (Damasio 1994: 130). The claim here is not that the reader, having read about the emotion, knows exactly what experiencing the emotion is like, after all this may only be achievable through experience. The point is that the text allows the reader to gain a closer sense of what the emotion is like through eloquent description, perhaps in terms of drawing an illuminating comparison. I might describe the relief of finishing a gruelling day’s work as being like ‘taking off a heavy coat’. Even appropriate words such as ‘relief’ and ‘unburdened’ lack the power to communicate what it feels like enjoyed by the simile which compares one feeling with another.

Secondly, a literary fictional text can stimulate the reader’s emotions in such a way as to direct cognitive reward. In her chapter ‘The Heart has its Reasons’ from *Considered Judgment* Catherine Elgin argues that the emotions: provide focus, lend a sense of salience, heighten awareness, redirect attention, sensitize readers to details that may have eluded

them, elicit sympathy, enable us to detect subtleties, nuances and intimations, move us to reclassify domains, provoke discovery, effect changes in emphasis and motivate us to adapt to context. This process of cognitive gain shows us what our emotions are capable of so fits the initial definition of ‘emotional literary cognitivism’ though any of the processes listed above works in a different way to the suggestions of Damasio and (as we shall see) Robinson.

Thirdly, reading literary fiction can educate our emotions. The cognitive boon, identified by Jenefer Robinson, consists in the ability to feel appropriately and to develop a sensitive thoughtfulness in the reader. This may be achieved in at least two ways. The first way includes ‘careful description of the emotional states of characters and how these characters are educated by their emotions’. A novel does this by showing: the characters’ focus of attention, their thoughts about the situation on which they are focussed, how these thoughts reflect a character’s desires, interests and values, the affective appraisals they make, and how physiological states serve to maintain their focus of attention (2005: 158). Robinson gives some examples of how this occurs in Edith Wharton’s *The Reef*. For instance, that Darrow learns ‘- the peculiarities of shame and pride, love and fear’ which the reader learns concurrently as if led through the same emotional experiences as the character (2005: 166).²¹ The second way in which a work of literary fiction can educate the reader’s emotions is by encouraging the reader to focus and reflect on his or her emotions directly. A fiction could portray a scenario so powerfully so as to involve the reader in the narrative to such an extent that the reader is stimulated to think how he or she would react if faced with the same situation (2005: 177).

Robinson cites the many advantages of gaining a sentimental education from literary fiction: ‘literature particularizes’ (2005: 166), the craft of the writer is central to the process of developing a sentimental education (2005: 178-179) for instance through his or her skilful use of free indirect discourse (2005: 180), subtle fine-grained description of ‘hitherto unexplored blends of emotion, for which there are no handy folk-psychological descriptions’ (2005: 183) and formal and rhetorical strategies such as use of imagery and sentence structure (2005: 194). The following passage, illustrative of the advantages of learning about emotion from *literary* fiction, describes Darrow’s obsessive focus on Anna’s telegram received at the start of the novel when she asks him to postpone his visit:

²¹ The claim that the reader of literary fiction gains knowledge of other people’s experiences is discussed explicitly in the section immediately below.

All the way from Charing Cross to Dover the train had hammered the words of the telegram into George Darrow's ears, ringing every change of irony on its commonplace syllables: rattling them out like a discharge of musketry, letting them, one by one, drip slowly and coldly into his brain, or shaking, tossing, transposing them like the dice in some game of the gods of malice; and now, as he emerged from his compartment at the pier, and stood facing the windswept platform and the angry sea beyond, they leapt out at him as if from the crest of the waves, stung and blinded him with a fresh fury of derision...

(Quoted in Robinson 2005: 161)

We learn what Darrow felt from this passage: a sense of feeling wounded, experiences of a slow percolation of suspicion, dejection and humiliation, unrest from churning thoughts, isolation and of not being in control. The reader gains knowledge of emotions experienced rather than beliefs held. Yet the status of the passage as fiction is not instrumental in the reader learning what the character feels: the same passage might appear in an autobiography to the same cognitive end. In contrast, the writing style is instrumental in conveying the cognitive gain. The use of onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, pathetic fallacy and alliteration help convey the kind of intense emotion in question. It is the fact that Wharton likens the words of Anna's telegram to: the hammered out rhythm of a train, a discharge of musketry, dripping liquid, a game of dice played by the gods of malice and stinging sea spray that conveys the relevant emotion. Yet it seems inadequate to merely cite that *literary* fiction plays a significant role in conveying emotional cognitive gain without some account of what is going on when this happens.

Experiential literary cognitivism

Experiential literary cognitivism is the view that we gain knowledge of other people's experiences through reading literary fiction. The subject matter of this cognitive gain may share ground with emotional literary cognitivism though the scope of 'experience' is broader than that of 'emotion'. One assumes that experiencing life as a woman in the army has more to it than emotion. David Lodge says in his *Consciousness and the Novel* (2002) that: 'The novel is arguably man's most successful effort to describe the experience of individual human beings moving through space and time' (Lodge 2002:10). A lengthier

version of this form of literary cognitivism based on experiential knowledge may be found in Dorothy Walsh's *Literature and Knowledge* (1969). Walsh argues that literary fictional descriptions of say: falling in love suddenly, falling out of love, being poor and lonely in a big city or experiencing the lure of danger (Walsh 1969: 100), convey something of what the actual experience is like to the reader. While the reader's experience can never be the same as the actual experience, the virtual literary experience allows space for reflection:

The virtual experience presented in literary art is far more available for realization than actual life experience. It is not simply that it will "stand still to be examined" ...[but is] elaborated and developed in point of subtlety and in point of complexity.

(Walsh 1969: 90)

In this quotation Walsh identifies a positive role for fiction qua virtual experience in so far as the fiction allows the reader to reflect on what is going on without the pressures of reacting as we need to in a real life scenario. For instance, we can put a book down and go away and think about the significance of a certain event but we cannot put life on pause in the same way. Nevertheless, not all genre fiction is equally effective in communicating experiential knowledge. One of the most interesting arguments put forward by Walsh focuses on the authenticity of transferring actual human experience to a literary virtual experience. Walsh argues that it is the author's perceptiveness and 'skill of transference' that assists the cognitive gain and helps avoid representations that do not ring true. In upshot, a representative form of literary cognitivism needs to include the authentic conveyance of human experience.

I believe this allows for some role for features standard in literature. Lodge buys into the philosophical literature on qualia, the raw felt quality of subjective experience. What is striking is his citing of literary devices to communicate knowledge of experience: first person, present tense narration (Lodge 2002: 11, 35), the richness of language (2002: 12, 18), metaphor and simile (2002: 13), 'repetition, alliteration, antithesis, and chiasmus' together with free indirect style (2002: 37). Some mention of literary devices occurs in Walsh's *Literature and Knowledge* and an important role is attributed to literary language to present kinds of experiences in such a way as to 'evoke the sensuous, the emotional and the intellectual, with equal facility' (Walsh 1969: 36). Walsh also admits that figures of speech and first and third person narratives perform a role in the reader gaining experiential knowledge (1969: 63). So while experiential literary cognitivism shows that it

is unwise to distance the cognitive gain from the fictional status of literary fiction altogether, there is a significant role for the literary.

Ethical literary cognitivism

Ethical literary cognitivism is the view that we gain knowledge of how we should act through reading literary fiction (Diamond 1991, 1996; Nussbaum 1992; Crary 2007; Hamalainen 2015). For example, many of Shakespeare's 'problem plays' have overtly ethical themes; in the final act of *The Tempest* a chastened Prospero declares: '...the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance' (V. 1, 27-30) and Caliban's parting lines include: 'I'll be wise hereafter, and seek for grace' (V. 1. 294-295). I choose 'ethical' over 'moral' to signify the breadth of what might be covered; the distinction between ethical and moral is made elsewhere (Williams 2010: 7-8; Wollheim 1984: 198). One of the best descriptions of what falls under the broad heading of 'ethical' is given in the following passage by Iris Murdoch:

When we apprehend and assess other people we do not consider only their solutions to specifiable practical problems, we consider something more elusive which may be called their total vision of life, as shown in their mode of speech or silence, their choice of words, their assessment of others, their conception of their own lives, what they think attractive or praise-worthy, what they think funny: in short, the configurations of their thought which show continually in their reactions and conversation.

(Murdoch 1956: 39)

Ethical literary cognitivism is awarded prominence in the diagram above as exponents make a case based on any or all of the previously identified cognitive theses: knowledge of plausible possibilities, conceptual knowledge, knowledge of how humans think and act, the exercise of certain skills (such as our imagination), the training of readers' emotional sensibilities and acquaintance with human experience. In fact, ethical literary cognitivism can seem like an all too hasty default position in literary cognitive circles where the discussion assumes an ethical turn before we have really clarified what is going on when I learn something from literary fiction. I shall take the question 'What is the cognitive gain from literary fiction?' to be a separate and logically prior question to 'Does literary fiction

give us moral knowledge?’ We need to investigate the first question, which is the remit in this project, in order to make a judgement on the second. As a result, I shall not be side-tracked into the respective merits and demerits of the role of literary examples in moral philosophy (e.g. Young 2001: 98-103) but maintain my focus on whether readers gain cognitively from literary fiction as fiction or literature.

Literary fiction is at an advantage in communicating a better understanding of our own and other people’s ethical views by its depth and details. In contrast to abstract moral philosophy or short schematic thought experiments such as the trolley problem, literary fiction gives us the bigger, more humanising picture. Yet, cannot such a picture also be sketched autobiographically where an author conveys the complexity and nuance of a real life ethical dilemma by providing a full rather than partial sketch? I think the answer is yes and so the fictional status does not seem crucially important in the communication of any advantage by literary fiction examples. That is not to say that the fictional status of a story used to illustrate an ethical concern is irrelevant; there may be advantages in being able to add detail at will without concern for historical accuracy. Take the story of *Gauguin* from Bernard Williams’s paper ‘Moral luck’ (1981: 22-26); here Williams says that it doesn’t matter to his argument whether the real Gauguin was motivated in the way described. It does not matter whether the same dynamic ever existed between real people rather than fictional characters. Any benefits of literary fiction for ethical knowledge lie in the depth and detail of the account.

Martha Nussbaum makes the point that such depth and detail are standard features of *literary* fiction. Nussbaum argues in *Love’s Knowledge* (1992) that ethical understanding ‘...involves emotional as well as intellectual activity and gives a certain type of priority to the perception of particular people and situations, rather than to abstract rules...further, that this ethical conception finds its most appropriate expression and statement in certain forms usually considered literary rather than philosophical’ (1992: ix). Martha Nussbaum makes the case that literary fiction qua literature is especially rich and complex (see passages already quoted in Chapter One). During her discussion the following literary devices receive specific treatment: particular detail (1992: 38-39), fine detailed description (1992: 36, 85, 95), full description (1992: 160-161), different points of view (1992: 32), imagery (1992: 150-151), richness of language (1992: 154) and metaphor (1992: 157). We are then in the same position as when we read other accounts of literary cognitivism and require an explanation as to what the exact benefits of literary devices are in this context.

The presence of literary devices may yield cognitive benefits that exist independently of the ethical context.

In upshot, it is not my intention to separate cognitive gain from the fictional status of literary fiction completely. There are instances when literary fiction as fiction supplies some cognitive benefits: in helping to entertain possibilities, in allowing a writer's or reader's imagination to explore human emotions, experiences and ethical attitudes. Yet I have shown that in each cognitivist position that there is an important, but underdeveloped, role for the literary. It is more often than not a reader's engagement with a standard feature of literary fiction as literature that is responsible for the cognitive gain at stake. While non-fictions can generally do the same cognitive job as fictions, it is not the case that non-literature can do the same job as literature. I maintain that if I were to set you a creative writing task: to communicate something about your personal life to an audience that does not know you, you would exercise significant craft and deliberation over *how* the story is told (its tone, symbolism and choice of simile). Despite the prevalence and importance of literary fiction qua literature, no systematic attempt has been made to date to link these standard features of literature to cognitive gain which, in my view, is an oversight and one I attempt to rectify in this project.

2.2 LITERARY ANTI-COGNITIVISM

'Literary anti-cognitivism' is the denial of one or more form of literary cognitivism and is, consequently, relative to whatever cognitivism is affirmed. There are two distinctive styles of literary anti-cognitivism: those that are directly hostile to any literary cognitivist thesis and those that are sceptical. A hostile version of literary anti-cognitivism holds that reading literary fiction positively detracts from the reader gaining cognitively whereas a sceptical version of anti-cognitivism makes the more general claim that any particular literary cognitivist argument does not sound plausible. One motivation for hostile literary cognitivism is that literary fiction can decrease or destroy understanding by numbing the readers' sensibilities and by providing an attractive mirage behind which nothing substantial is to be found. We may reach for a metaphor as a matter of habit or as a quick

substitute for rigorous investigation. Yet hostile literary anti-cognitivism is not as interesting as it sounds.

Hostile literary anti-cognitivism is false if taken as a general claim about all literary fiction as we *do* learn some things from reading: the meaning of words, stories and, occasionally, facts about the world. We can concede hostile literary cognitivism, as a hedged sufficiency claim, as literary fictions can sometimes numb or hide cognitive advance. Of course, there might be other factors at play when cognitive advantage is numbed such as a lack of thoughtfulness in the author or lack of maturity in the reader. This said, I am still left wondering what is going on when the reader succeeds in learning something from reading literary fiction and whether the gain is all that it is dressed up to be? Sceptical literary cognitivism is the view that cognitivist accounts seem dubious in important respects. I shall take time in this section to highlight the main concerns. The reader should note that the view that our learning from literary fiction has no bearing on our valuing literary fiction is a different claim to either hostile or sceptical forms of anti-cognitivism and is labelled ‘literary non-cognitivism’ and dealt with separately in section (2.3).

Anti-cognitivist arguments have been waged against literary fiction as fiction and against literary fiction as literature. In the former case the standard criticism states that given fiction is a figment of the author’s imagination and that imagination is not a reliable source of knowledge then a fictional text is not a reliable source of knowledge (Plato *Republic* 377 d-e; Lamarque 1996: 105; Diffey 1997: 31-32; Graham 1997: 47-48; Hepola 2014: 80, 86). At best, the reader gains knowledge when what is imagined coincides with whatever is the case in the world beyond the text. The standard rebuttal is twofold. First, that ‘knowledge’ is too narrow a scope for what should be considered as the appropriate cognitive gain from fiction. Secondly, that there are fictions, such as counterfactual history and certain thought experiments in science and philosophy, which yield cognitive benefit. I shall elaborate on ‘understanding’ as the cognitive gain at stake in the next chapter (section 3.2).

In this section, I limit my discussion of the anti-cognitivist challenge to literary fiction as *literature* and spend some time establishing literary anti-cognitivism as a sceptical position that raises challenges rather than a consistently worked through philosophy. Literary anti-cognitivism against literary fiction as literature has received less attention than arguments

directed at fiction yet enjoys an unbroken tradition from Plato to the present day.²² The contention holds that literary devices are merely rhetorical devices that either do not add anything of cognitive worth or, worse still, deceive the unwitting into thinking something worthwhile has been stated when it has not. Plato wages the most famous attack on poets arguing that the expert is always worth consulting over the poet (*Ion* 540 a-c), that the literary arts appeal to the emotions as opposed to reason (*Ion* 535c-536d) and that literary criticism suffers from much the same flaws (*Protagoras* 347c).

I shall not dwell on all Plato's arguments as his target is more specifically the kind of moral education that promotes a study of poets such as Homer and Hesiod as viable sources of moral guidance in and of themselves: '... once it is appreciated that the poets are central to the educational apparatus [of ancient Greece], the successive criticisms of poetry fall into place' (Havelock 1963:13). The unifying thought through Plato's criticisms of the literary arts is that they are the product of irrationality. It is as if literary works are written under a spell of inspiration where the words are not the poet's own but those of the muse striking at will:

So I soon made up my mind about the poets too: I decided that it was not wisdom that enabled them to write their poetry, but a kind of instinct or inspiration, such as you find in seers and prophets who deliver all their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean. It seemed clear to me that the poets were in much the same case; and I also observed that the very fact that they were poets made them think that they had a perfect understanding of all other subjects, of which they were totally ignorant.

(*Apology* 22c trans. Tredennick 1954, 1987)

One consequence of prioritising what sounds sweetest to the ear over knowledge is that the author loses focus on the latter. Reciters, actors and literary critics who were contemporary to Plato were referred to as 'Rhapsodes' and are criticised for promoting the art of persuasion (*Ion* 540d-540e). In addition, the Sophists used poetic tropes to their own

²² Some notable cases include: Augustine's *Confessions* Book 1 Sections 16 and 18; Hobbes's *Leviathan* Chapter 4, Section 13 which cites metaphor as 'an abuse of speech'; Locke's warning against rhetoric in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* III. 10. 34; these passages present anti-cognitivist arguments against literary fiction qua literature.

persuasive ends to turn the attention of the unwary (*Protagoras* 320c-328d). In its most dangerous form rhetoric is the chosen means of deception by unscrupulous politicians (*The Republic* 488d; 493b; 495e). In a more innocent form it is the way someone who lacks knowledge of a given subject proceeds. On his diplomatic mission to Rome in 155 BC, Carneades commended justice in his first oration but argued on the very next day that justice was a problematic notion, leaving his audience none the wiser as to his moral thesis. In such a circumstance the style or fluency of how a moral argument is presented drops out as irrelevant to the truth or validity of the argument. Exposure to too much of this kind of address is not educative but potentially corrosive to reasoned judgement.

Plato's legacy is found in contemporary statements of literary anti-cognitivism; take the following passage from Gregory Currie's essay 'Creativity and the Insight That Literature Brings':

[Literary] style may serve purposes that are the opposite of knowledge-enhancing. I suggest that one of the reasons we enjoy complexity in fiction – and hence one reason we find complexity in successful fiction – is that it provides the kind of distraction that lowers vigilance, helping thereby to generate an illusion of learning. Paradoxically, the sheer complexity of great narrative art, so often taken as a sign of cognitive richness and subtlety, may increase its power to spread ignorance and error.

(Currie 2014: 51-52)

Currie's anti-cognitivism, like many we shall meet, is sceptical and cautionary rather than argumentatively persuasive. The anti-cognitivist challenge is often that cognitivists clarify or elaborate their view. Like many literary anti-cognitivists Currie takes the cognitive gain at stake to be truth or knowledge; science and history are the usual models of epistemic success.²³ While science and history are epistemic success stories, it strikes me as misguided to conceive them as the only forms of cognitive gain and I shall continue to use the placeholder term 'understanding' in what follows. Unlike those anti-cognitivists who focus on fiction, Currie has the literariness of literary fiction in his sights in the extract above which makes his position directly antithetical to my own. The emphasis on literariness refreshes and reconfigures the traditional anti-cognitivist versus cognitivist debate and I shall present the strongest arguments against the cognitive potential of literary fiction as literature, leaving objections to literary fiction as fiction to one side. These anti-

²³ A further example may be found in the seminal paper by Jerome Stolnitz (1992: 191- 192).

cognitivist concerns are arranged in three waves of doubt: about the writer of literature, about the literary text and about the reception of literary fiction. Each concern identifies what needs to be met if my literary cognitivism is to be judged successful.

One of the strongest arguments against the cognitive potential of literary fiction as literature is termed the ‘no-expertise’ argument in Carroll’s survey (2007: 28) and is waged against artists as a whole in the following formulation:

Consider the way in which someone becomes an artist. They study their craft and the materials of their medium. Painters learn about perspective and color theory; poets, prosody; musicians, scales; photographers, lenses; film-makers, editing; and so forth. The expertise involves mastering the tools of their trade and discovering the formal opportunities they have betoken. Artists as such, it is charged, have no special expertise in any branch of knowledge other than that pertaining to their artform and its medium.

(Carroll 2007: 28)

Two sides of the same anti-cognitivist coin are: that the craft of the artist has no bearing on specialist knowledge and that specialist knowledge is not affected in any beneficial way by conveying that knowledge through an artistic medium. The argument has a long history, Socrates’s questioning of Ion elicited the somewhat obvious admission that the skill of the poet does not concern the technicalities of seafaring, medicine, herdsmanhood or spinning wool and in each case we would consult an expert in these fields. So, the rhetorical question runs, what is the literary author’s expertise? The answer is of course that writers of literature are expert at writing literature. The follow up question is what has the skill of writing literature got to do with understanding something other than literature? My contention is that the distinctive standard features of literary writing can contribute a great deal to the reader’s understanding of the world outside the text. However, in Plato’s eyes the artistry of a wordsmith is equivalent to the craft of a blacksmith or silversmith in manipulating aspects of the world to meet practical demands more effectively. Of course some facility with language is desirable in communicating arguments of proven substance, all agree on this, but this facility in communication is not where the cognitive work is carried out. It is not so much that the writer of literary fiction has no expertise but that the expertise is irrelevant to gaining a better understanding of the subject matter so we should change the name of the criticism to ‘the no relevant expertise argument’. Further, any skill

in writing style seems compatible with the art of persuading a naïve reader, perhaps by appealing to the readers' emotions. In sum, the 'no relevant expertise' argument challenges the literary cognitivist to explain how any skill at writing in a literary style aids cognitive gain.

Next, to anti-cognitivist arguments aimed at the literary fictional text. Cognitivists claim that the reader is able to gain a better understanding not just of the text but of the world beyond the text and that an understanding of the literary text helps an understanding of the world. How do the literary aspects of literary fiction help in this respect? The opacity of literary language, the critic would allege, gets in the way of the pragmatics of communicating facts in the clearest way possible:

In literary works, opacity is an asset – it is sought, and it enriches character identity – while in referential discourses opacity is a weakness, to be minimised, and merely clouds personal characterisation. (Lamarque 2014: 78)

Literary language seems too slippery, ambiguous and multi-faceted to help get a clear grip on what should be checked against the world; if indeed checking is the right way to proceed (I address this issue in Chapter Five). The criticism runs that literary writing complicates and confuses what is asserted and as a consequence leads to an entertaining bedazzlement rather than the clarity required in understanding something better. What exactly is meant to be taken from a literary description that enables us to understand something in the world, for instance, through checking against past or future experience? The concern is that literary writing besets rather than aids cognitive advance.

Two related charges are made by Stolnitz (1992). If one buys into the cognitivist model that a literary text supplies working hypotheses of sorts that can be checked against the world, a problem arises as to how general or specific such hypotheses are meant to be. Stolnitz famously gives his summary of *Pride and Prejudice* as 'stubborn pride and ignorant prejudice keep attractive people apart' (Stolnitz 1992: 193). This kind of summary while not false leaves too much detail out – but how much detail needs to be included? Stolnitz takes as a second example, later on in his paper, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and speculates over the hypothesis that would be tested against extra-textual reality:

The criminal [some criminals?] [all criminals?] [criminals in St. Petersburg?] [criminals who kill old moneylenders] [criminals who kill old money lenders and come under the influence of saintly prostitutes?] desires to be caught and punished.

(Stolnitz 1992: 199)

It is a standard feature of literary fiction qua literature to include an amount of detail but what is not clear is how much of this detail feeds into the cognitive gain promised nor what hypothesis the reader is meant to check against the world outside the literary fiction. Thirdly, Stolnitz points out that the same literary work may contain contradictory statements. Take as an example, the nurse's interrogation of Phaedra in Euripides's *Hippolytus* where two opposite speeches are presented over the course of a few pages. At first the nurse rails against Phaedra's love for Hippolytus (lines 244-256) before arguing that passion is good (lines 432-470). In addition, one might expect contradictions between literary works given that, unlike the sciences, literary art is not usually a collaborative but rather an individual enterprise. The problem is that literary fiction qua literature (or indeed qua fiction) offers no way of resolving a contradiction; such work is done outside the literary fiction. Hypotheses extracted from or arising out of literary fiction are unfalsifiable by any means related to reading literary fiction which is a hallmark of methodological error rather than cognitive potential.

A battery of literary anti-cognitivist arguments applies to the reception of literary fictional works. In his paper 'On the Historical Triviality of Art' (1991) Stolnitz asks why literary art among other artistic genres tends to lack influence on society. Of course there are discrete examples of low-brow literary influences (see Schama 1989: 174-182) and isolated examples of high-brow literary art having social effect: Rousseau's *Confessions* gets a mention in Schama's study of the French Revolution, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* famously led to a rash of suicides, then there is the social influence of novels by Gogol, Dostoevsky, Fielding, Dickens and Lawrence. The sceptical concern is that we would expect more social influence from literary fiction if literary fiction supplied cognitive gain of any importance:

Think, if you will, of the countless critiques of other novels and plays that have revealed the motivations and feelings of their characters with a subtlety and refinement to which a good deal of academic psychology hardly aspires. These

critiques enthusiastically promise and would deliver the deepest truths of human nature. They presuppose and endorse artistic cognitivism. They become the subjects of vigorous study and lively debate within literary criticism. Then think, finally, that they do all this without so much as creating a ripple extra-murally, in professional psychology or anywhere else. (Stolnitz 1992: 194)

While a cognitivist might concede a lack of social influence, lack of social influence by itself does not indicate a lack of cognitive merit; after all analytic philosophy exerts little social influence.

One possible explanation for literature's lack of influence, suggested by anti-cognitivists, is that the cognitive gain given to the reader is trivial in the philosophical sense of being uninformative (Stolnitz 1992: 194, 200). What we learn may be uninformative in at least two ways: first, what we come to know may be so crushingly obvious that it would be easy to find out without recourse to literary fiction, or secondly that the reader may be in possession of the knowledge already. Carroll offers a cognitivist response to the first alternative with his accusation that 'it is really the skeptic who has rendered the insights ... banal by means of his paraphrase' (1997: 36). According to this line of argument, every paraphrase is banal as far as it is a popular, telescoped summation: that summer is warmer than winter. In the case of literary fiction, the last lines of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* constitute a paraphrase: 'Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? Or, having it, is satisfied? ...' (Thackeray 1994: 689). However any judgement as to whether this statement is crushingly obvious on its own ignores the preceding 688 pages in which the theme of vanity is explored, rendering the charge of banality unfair. Carroll's counter provides useful advice on how to read a work of literature: 'don't judge a book by its paraphrase', but does not meet the anti-cognitivist challenge that works of literature when taken as a whole state the crushingly obvious: that *Vanity Fair* is trivial rather than its paraphrase.

The anti-cognitivist challenge that literary fiction merely tells us what we know already is hard to comment on without knowledge of what we know already which one would need to specify in individual cases. Stolnitz puts forward an unfair dichotomy between what we might learn from literature and what we might learn from life arguing that there is much we do not need to learn from literature as we can just gain knowledge 'by living and learning' (Stolnitz 1992: 196). The cognitivist should reply that learning from literary

fiction is not an alternative to learning from life but part of it. Reading about a shared experience may help draw attention to details missed in the course of living the experience. Stolnitz's target seems to be any pompous form of cognitivism that promises grand truths but the cognitivist does not need to claim that literature supplies grand truths. Nevertheless, we are still left wondering why literary fiction exerts a limited social influence.

A final anti-cognitivist concern relating to readers of literary fiction was rehearsed in a moral context in the early twentieth century debate about studying literature at degree level (Eagleton 2008: 15-46). In brief, the thought runs that if literary fiction is effective in promoting understanding then we would expect avid readers of literary fiction to enjoy better understanding than people who do not read literary fiction:

It seems a pretty anodyne truth that art can "enhance understanding" and there are no doubt even senses of the phrase that do not imply the acquisition of belief. But it does prompt a question for all such knowledge-based cognitive theories: how is this "illumination" or "enhanced" understanding manifested? Would we expect that those immersed in the great works of literature understand people and the world better than those who are not so well read? Yet there seems no evidence that such readers are especially knowledgeable about human traits, as are psychologists, or social scientists, or even philosophers. Literary critics are not sought out as experts or advisers on human affairs.

(Lamarque 2007: 21)

I have a worry about how broad statements such as 'those well versed in literature should enjoy a better understanding of people and the world' can be tested. Broad statements such as 'if fresh air is good for the health then we would expect those working outdoors to be healthier' are fraught with *ceteris paribus* clauses involving genetics, nutrition and socio-economic factors which makes an empirical test difficult. Members of the set of readers of literary fiction may also be members of other sets such as 'professional academics', 'sensitive types' or 'educated' which will affect the result. Yet an empirical test is what anti-cognitivists seem to demand. Gregory Currie again:

There is such a thing as getting it right in plumbing, lion-taming, and other respectable practical skills, and such a thing as confirmation that the learner has

gotten it right. The sensitivity training purportedly offered by literature cannot be treated as a mysterious exception to this.

(Currie 2014: 44)

To comment on what would count as a tenable empirical study for my thesis is a project for another time and all I seek to do here is to acknowledge the anti-cognitivist call for empirical evidence. However, I would like to make some comment on two recent empirical studies that come nearest to the cognitive thesis developed here; namely Evan Kidd's and Emanuele Castano's paper 'Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind' (2013) and Emy Koopman's paper 'Empathetic reactions after reading: The role of genre, personal factors and affective responses' (2015). Both studies accept the difference between literary fiction and popular fiction. Kidd and Castano assume early on in their paper that popular fiction is 'more readerly' and tends to 'portray the world as internally consistent and predictable' which may only reaffirm readers' expectations so not promote theory of mind (2013: 1). Similarly, Koopman takes 'literary fiction' to include aesthetic and unconventional features, unlike non-literature, where 'the striking features in literary texts could increase the time needed to process the content as well as making the content more vivid' (2015: 5-6). In both studies the 'literary passages' were selected from novels that had been nominated or had won a national award for literature.

The Kidd and Castano study posed five questions to 86 participants on 'theory of mind' which is defined as the human capacity to comprehend that other people hold beliefs and desires and that these may differ from one's own beliefs and desires. The result from the study suggested that there is a relation between reading literary stories and theory of mind. In the Koopman online survey 282 participants, of whom 218 filled out both questionnaires, were given one of three excerpts from: a literary work, a life narrative and an expository text. Which text was received was randomised and participants were told that 'what they were about to read was a story based on true events'. Each passage was either about depression or grief. Participants then received another excerpt, again randomised but from a different genre from that of the excerpt previously received, and on the alternative subject to the passage they had read before. Participants were then asked to state to what extent they were in agreement with five follow up statements such as 'I feel understanding for people who are depressed' and 'the basic insurance policy should cover therapy for depression'. Participants were also asked whether, on completing the reading and test, they wanted to make a donation to a relevant charitable organisation. Koopman's

results suggest that exposure to literature predicted empathetic understanding in both cases of depression and grief and related to a significantly higher likelihood of donation.

Both empirical studies generate results that are compatible with my thesis but I do not want to hold too much sway by either for the following worries. First, there are a limited number of participants from which it is difficult to draw general conclusions. Secondly, the focus is on knowledge of other minds or empathy rather than the general cognitive skills that I want to defend; ‘understanding’ as a concept is not unpacked so it is unclear as to what sense of understanding is being tested. Thirdly, readers of literary fiction performed only slightly better so what is of statistical significance may not be entirely persuasive to a sceptic. Before the issue of empirical testing can be addressed we need a far clearer account of what we are looking for in terms of cognitive gain. We also need a realistic time scale given that the business of accruing cognitive skills from reading literature is likely to be a lengthier process than the immediacy of feedback in ‘lion taming or plumbing’. I shall take up this issue again briefly in the closing remarks and in light of the argument through chapters 3-5.

To draw the above discussion to a close, I have sketched literary anti-cognitivism as a sceptical position: one that harbours serious reservations about the cognitive power of literary fiction. Four main questions are asked of the literary cognitivist:

1. What has the skill of writing in a manner standard to literary fiction got to do with understanding something better?
2. How does the status of a literary fictional text as literature help with our understanding of the world outside the text?
3. If literary fiction enhances understanding then why hasn’t literary fiction exerted more influence beyond the study of literature?
4. How are readers of literary fiction any better at understanding people, if at all, than those who do not read literary fictional works?

These questions present a series of challenges to the literary cognitivist but they do not present a decisive argument against literary cognitivism. I shall address the fourfold literary anti-cognitivist challenge in the course of the remaining three chapters.

2.3 LITERARY NON-COGNITIVISM

‘Literary non-cognitivism’ is the thesis that cognitive gain is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on literary value. The thought is that cognitive gain is irrelevant to our valuing literary fiction just as the collectability of literary fiction is irrelevant to the value of such a work as either literature or fiction. The fact that a first folio of Shakespeare’s plays has economic value does not have any bearing on the value of Shakespeare’s work as literary art. Similarly, the fact that the Shakespearean canon may be able to supply truth or develop understanding has no bearing on the value of the work as either literature or fiction. Literary non-cognitivism is not the same as literary anti-cognitivism as non-cognitivists like Lamarque and Olsen do not doubt literary fiction *can* provide cognitive gain (Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 136). Literary non-cognitivism is compatible with the notion that we can learn successfully from literary works, that authors often aim at conveying cognitive gain and that literary works are valued for what they teach us. The contention is that none of these factors are a requirement of our valuing literary fiction as literary fiction. Lamarque and Olsen are sometimes classified as ‘no truth theorists’ and Lamarque has consistently defended the idea that conveying truth has no bearing on literary value, most recently in *The Opacity of Narrative* (2014: 121). I favour the term ‘non-cognitivism’ over ‘no truth theory’ as the position does not only deny truth value as a necessary condition for literary appreciation but just as readily applies to understanding or indeed any other candidate for cognitive advantage. A selection of arguments is presented against non-cognitivism in the course of this section.

Lamarque and Olsen distinguish between literary fiction as literature and literary fiction as fiction and maintain that cognitive merits have no effect on either our appreciation of a literary fictional work as fiction or as literature. Lamarque and Olsen examine the attitudes and practices of reading literary fiction, from which they conclude that there is no requirement for truth-telling in relation to fictional or literary appreciation. Literary fiction qua fiction is uttered with a fictive purpose and approached from a fictive stance by its readership (1994: 32). The fictive stance is a complex of attitudes, responses and rule-governed practices adopted towards fictional narratives. While a fictional narrative may contain truths, truth-telling is not part of the culture of response to fiction. One could imagine a good yarn being ruined by persistent interrogation over whether such and such actually happened to so and so in exactly the way that it is depicted. Fiction may be used to various ends: entertainment, instruction, aesthetic appreciation or to communicate

experience, but such ends are external to the practice of fiction (1994: 445-446). In fact all that we can say about fiction as fiction is that it is a way of talking and writing that is received in a typical way where gaining truth, knowledge or understanding bear no relation to how such a text is received.

Non-cognitivists run the risk of drawing a false inference if their argument runs: 'it does not matter whether a certain detail in a given fiction is true therefore truth does not matter in fiction'. It does not matter that Thomas Hardy's novels are set in the fictional district of Wessex but that does not mean that it does not matter whether Hardy's vision of life, a generally pessimistic one, is right or not.

There is, parallel to the fictional stance, a literary stance which takes the aim of literary fiction to be the maximisation of aesthetic appeal: 'Adopting the literary stance towards a work involves being prepared to make an effort to recognize the qualities making the literary work a worthwhile object of appreciation. To adopt the literary stance therefore is to be ready to make an effort to see a text as expressive not of just any theme, but of such a theme as maximizes the aesthetic reward it offers the reader' (1994: 426-427). There is something Wildean in this: novels are neither true nor false just well written or badly written. What matters about a novel's portrayal of love or death is that these subjects give the piece an aesthetic lift rather than cognitive gravitas.

While I disagree with the non-cognitivist contention that cognitive gain is so far removed from aesthetic appreciation, for reasons that will shortly be rehearsed, Lamarque's approach has a lot in common with my thesis. I agree with Lamarque's separation of the fictional and literary stances, his analysis of how we read literary fiction and his statements of cognitive gain from literary fiction (2014: 149; 166-167). Consider the following passage from *The Opacity of Narrative*:

At the heart of narrative opacity is the idea that a reader's attention to textual nuances, implicit valuations, narrator reliability, symbolic resonance, humour, irony, tone, allusions or figurative meanings in the textual content will help give precise shape to the thoughts and beliefs that the content brings to mind. Similarly, the very ordering of the material, the manner in which information is imparted in a narrative and the setting up and fulfilment of expectations, can structure the reader's perspectives. Thought-clusters, then, are densely opaque when formed with a literary interest in mind.

(Lamarque 2014: 149)

This observation by Lamarque on how we read literature is also a central premise in my literary cognitivist thesis. My disagreement is with the non-cognitivist conclusion that any cognitive gain derived from opaque or thick narratives, a standard feature of literary fiction, has no bearing on aesthetic value. We return to this in Chapter Four where I examine the kind of understanding gained from specific literary devices and where I make the case that cognitive gain relates to aesthetic effectiveness and hence stands in a relation to aesthetic value (section 4.7).

Lamarque and Olsen (1994) and latterly Lamarque, as the sole author, defend their position with three main arguments:

- i) cognitive gain is not a concern of the author,
- ii) cognitive gain is not a concern of the reader and
- iii) cognitive gain is not a concern of the critic.

I shall rehearse these claims next and make the point that exceptions are easy enough to find before ending this section with two further criticisms: that cognitive gain can be integral to literary appreciation and that the notion of intrinsic value, a seemingly important part of the non-cognitivist argument, requires further defence.

Lamarque and Olsen argue that truth plays no part in the concerns of the writer of literary fiction in a significant number of cases (1994: 296-297; 2014: 130-131). For example, Shakespeare changes Caesar's last words to the Latin 'Et tu, Brute?' meaning 'And you, Brutus?' (*Julius Caesar* III. 1. 77) while Suetonius tells us that Caesar's last words were the Greek: 'Kai su, teknon?' meaning 'You too, son?' Non-cognitivists argue that factual errors are no grounds for artistic criticism and that one could imagine a factually inaccurate novel being praised for its literary aesthetic value.

Non-cognitivists are correct that the conveyance of accurate information is not always the primary concern of the literary author. The non-cognitivist is not correct, however, that accuracy never affects the value of a piece. Mark Rowe reports that 'some errors are nearly fatal' for instance Philip Larkin mistakes the type of wave under discussion at the start of his poem 'Absences' (Rowe 1997: 334-335). In this case, a laissez-aller approach to accuracy renders the piece incoherent where incoherence, one assumes, is not the intention of the author. Imagine a similar inaccuracy occurring in a novel about environmental ethics to the overall detriment of our appreciation of the work. The same culture of writing where factual inaccuracy is ignored does not pervade all branches of literary fiction in every era.

With specific regard to aesthetic appreciation, a reader might be so distracted by inaccuracy as to have his or her aesthetic appreciation numbed. I believe non-cognitivists overstate the case and that there are examples where a deficit of truth leads to a decrease in aesthetic appreciation.

Next to the reader of literary fiction, Lamarque argues that there are plenty of examples where factual inaccuracies in a text do not diminish the reader's aesthetic appreciation of that text. The fact that Piggy's glasses were concave and could not start a fire, where a fire is crucial to the plot of Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, does not detract from the artistic enjoyment of the novel (Lamarque 2010: 375). However, no general rule can be applied here and there are plenty of counter examples which may be cited that some detail not ringing true *does* affect the reader's aesthetic appreciation of a text. At this stage it is worth pointing out that 'not ringing true' covers more than just 'not being true' and that a reader of literary fiction may be affected by a text being: implausible, unbelievable, sounding inauthentic or even just silly.²⁴

Take, for instance, these readers' responses to Protocol 2 and 6 in I.A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* (1929). Comments on Christina Rossetti's 'Spring Quiet' (1847) run:

2.2 I think this is utterly absurd...*who has ever seen* a "green" house, or seen the sun shine shadily?

2.22 Full of mistakes.

(Italics in original)

Another comment in response to 'Spring and Fall, to a young child' (1880) by Gerard Manley Hopkins states:

6.32 The thought is worthless, and hopelessly muddled.

6.36 What does all this mean?...*I should* like to know precisely *what* is the 'blight man was born for'.

(Italics in original)

²⁴ One comment on Poem II in I.A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* just reads 'whole poem silly' (Richards 1929: 33).

In the case of Protocol (2.2 and 2.22) the reader objects to something not being true while in the case of Protocol (6.32) the reader objects to the thought conveyed by the poem being muddled and in the case of Protocol (6.36) the reader objects to the thought being expressed in an imprecise way. In each case a cognitive deficiency about the poem is taken to affect the reader's aesthetic appreciation of the poem.

Lamarque and Olsen point out that evidence for their non-cognitivism may be found in literary critical approaches to works '... there is no significant place for truth as a critical term applied to works of literature' (1994: 1). Lamarque and Olsen cite as an example the reaction of Rebecca to the suggestion that she may be Dr West's real daughter in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*: '...appreciation involves no evaluative judgement concerning 'how true' Rebecca's behaviour is to the actual reaction patterns of women who have been involved in similar relationships' (1994: 300). The co-authors of *Truth, Fiction and Literature* extrapolate from cases where truth-telling has no place in the critical appreciation of literary fiction and conclude that: 'Literary works *qua* literary works are neither probable nor improbable just as they are not modes of fact-stating' (1994: 318). According to non-cognitivists: truth-telling, probability, fact stating and understanding play no significant role in evaluating a work of literary fiction.

Lamarque and Olsen make a bold empirical claim about literary criticism without evidence which makes their claim seem implausible. On any non-partial reading, literary criticism seems studded with the kinds of claim the non-cognitivist insists never occur (although there has been something of a tailing off recently). There follows some examples where critics praise literary fiction for being insightful, well-observed or perceptive and blame literary fiction for being implausible, misleading or unconvincing.

In the opening chapter of *The Great Tradition* F. R. Leavis quotes Lord David Cecil on George Eliot 'Her plots are too neat and symmetrical to be true' (1962: 15) and Henry James is quoted as describing Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as being 'chock-full of faults and falsity' (1962: 33). On a note of endorsement, Joseph Conrad is praised by Leavis for his 'profoundly serious interest in life' (1972: 27) as is D. H. Lawrence (1962: 35). As a critic, Lawrence criticised Hardy's bleak view of life:

This is the tragedy of Hardy, always the same: the tragedy of those who, more or less pioneers, have died in the wilderness, whither they had escaped for free action, after having left the walled security, and the comparative imprisonment, of the established convention. This is the theme of novel after novel...

Hardy's pessimism and the fact that he repeatedly explores the worst aspects of life affect Lawrence's aesthetic appreciation of novels such as *Jude the Obscure*. These examples suggest that the non-cognitivist is wrong to argue that it does not matter to the aesthetic appreciation of a work whether a work of literary art is true or false or whether the vision of life depicted rings true or not. In many cases it matters a great deal.

So far, our treatment of literary non-cognitivism has been broadly negative: the position understates cognitive success in the composition and reception of literary fictional texts. A more positive thesis is also required in order to dissuade the reader from adopting a non-cognitivist standpoint; so how does cognitive value lead to aesthetic value? Monroe Beardsley sheds some light on the joint enterprise of aesthetic and cognitive gain in his series of flexible criteria for aesthetic experience in Chapter Sixteen of *The Aesthetic Point of View*. Beardsley argues that an experience has aesthetic character if one's attention is fixed on a work and a selection of further conditions are present such as felt freedom, detached affect and active discovery (Beardsley 1982: 288-289). Some of these criteria may be omitted or the list added to depending on the particular literary work; hence they are termed flexible criteria. I am interested in the fourth condition as it appears in Beardsley's list (1982: 288-289) and described in a later passage as follows:

... One of the central components in art experience must be the experience of discovery, of insight into connections and organizations – the elation that comes from the apparent opening up of intelligibility. I call this “active discovery” to draw attention to the excitement of meeting a cognitive challenge, of flexing one's powers to make *intelligible* – where this combines *making sense of something* with *making something make sense*. In this aspect, experiences with aesthetic character overlap with experiences of empirical scientists and mathematicians; here is the link between them.

(Beardsley 1982: 292)

This is the kind of cognitive gain that I seek to defend yet to count this cognitive gain alongside other contributing factors is still not enough for my purposes; after all both may lie as frigid bedfellows. The kind of relation I need to show is where the process of cognitive gain has aesthetic appeal. A parallel exists in mathematics where an aesthetic judgement about beauty or elegance is made about the cognitive value involved in solving a mathematical problem. The solution to a problem in mathematics might be simple in

contrast to the complexity of the problem and this contrast strikes the mathematician in aesthetic terms. This task is too ambitious an undertaking for this section alone but I shall end with some preliminary comment to bring us closer to the discussion on aesthetic effectiveness developed in Chapter Four.

Anna Christina Ribeiro refers to a direct relationship between cognitive benefit and aesthetic enjoyment in her paper on why we enjoy sad poetry (Ribeiro 2014: 196, 197). In one kind of example, the literary vehicle for cognitive gain is aesthetically pleasing for reasons explained by psychology ‘...formal poetic devices, such as alliteration, rhyme, meter, and so on, are pleasing in themselves, for reasons having to do with our auditory psychology, and as special aids to cognition they make the process of understanding a poetic message more pleasurable’ (2014: 190). In two further cases, there is a stronger link between cognitive gain and aesthetic experience. The reader can appreciate the succinct expression of an author in instances where a point is made with a minimum number of well-chosen words:

The pleasure here, as in other areas of life, is that of getting more for less: fewer words, by virtue of being combined in novel ways, engender a greater and faster expansion of our ‘encyclopaedic entries’ than more words combined in the usual ways would have.

(Ribeiro 2014: 196)

In the third case, Ribeiro argues that auditory pleasure and novel expression on their own are not sufficient conditions on engendering aesthetic satisfaction when not accompanied by meaningful content (2014: 197). Cognitive gain can come down to how a given metaphor works which leads us to appreciate the metaphor aesthetically in so far as this trope communicates to us forcefully and expansively.

Take the following lines from Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*:

Antony: O Sun, thy uprise shall I see no more!

Fortune and Antony part here; even here

Do we shake hands. All come to this? The hearts

That spaniel’d me at heels, to whom I gave

Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets

On blossoming Caesar; and this pine is bark'd

That overtopp'd them all. Betray'd I am. (IV. 12. 20-26)

One thing I understand better from reading this passage is a certain kind of power relationship: the kind wielded by the nominally powerless over the nominally powerful. Two images, among other devices, help me to understand this. The court spaniels have clearly enjoyed some power over Antony who admits to appeasing them and yet they have withdrawn their support and now deign to lavish slavering affection on Caesar. Secondly, Antony's construal of himself as a noble pine, felled, hollowed out and launched for the impending sea battle is an image of a leader as the very vessel of his side's fortunes. Central to the relation between cognitive value and aesthetic appreciation is my admiration of the skill of the author in crafting these lines. I admire the artistry of how so much significant material is conveyed in these few lines: the pun on 'bark'd' that links the images of a slowly dying, ring-barked tree and a war ship, the alliteration of 'hands', 'hearts' and 'heels', the accompanying allusion to Achilles's weak spot, the allusion to Matthew (15: 26-27) where dogs are described as feeding on their master's scraps in a reverse power dynamic than the one described above, inter-textual references to fortune and betrayal. My aesthetic appreciation of this passage would be shallow without my developing an understanding of the text and what the text informs me about a certain kind of power dynamic. I might note the pun on 'bark'd' but so what? My reading would have to end there without further comment rather than yield the results typical of literary analysis and interpretation. In this example, gaining a better understanding of a literary work has increased my aesthetic appreciation of that literary work.

Finally, we should question the non-cognitivist account of value. Lamarque and Olsen point out that literary fiction enjoys an autonomous status and as a result should be valued on its own terms or for its own sake (Lamarque and Olsen 1994: viii). In the final chapter of their seminal work the authors argue that the value of literary fiction is gained from the process of reading and appreciation:

Value is not inherent in discourse or in texts. It emerges only by seeing a text as either fictional or literary, i.e. in taking up the fictional or literary stance to the text. One can then see it as serving more or less well the purpose or purposes served by the practice.

(Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 440)

The claim is that reading literary fiction as literature and as fiction is its own reward, that is reading literary fiction has intrinsic value. In contrast to, say, reading a text in order to pass an examination and gain a qualification.

According to one prominent account of intrinsic value that seems plausible: X has intrinsic value if X gives rise to non-instrumentally valuable experiences provided it is experienced with understanding (Budd 1995: 4). Malcolm Budd says of intrinsic value: 'It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience' (1995: 5). Budd says of instrumental value: '... the instrumental value of a work of art, its beneficial or harmful, short- or long-term effects or influence, either on a given person or people in general – where the effects are consequences of the experience and not elements or aspects of the experience itself – is not the value of the work of art *as* a work of art' (1995: 5). That leaves us having to give an account of the grounds for such non-instrumentally valuable experiences. Budd argues that there are many and various grounds for our non-instrumentally valuable experiences; with no a priori way of determining what gives rise to such experiences. As a result, we are to decide this issue on a case by case basis. However, the literary non-cognitivist rules out, in advance, any role for cognitive gain in the story of non-instrumental value. This non-cognitivist exclusion of cognitive gain in yielding non-instrumental value looks unmotivated and consequently ad hoc.

To sum up, Lamarque and Olsen are right to draw the distinction between receiving literary fiction as literature and as fiction but overstate the case that writers, readers and critics are not concerned with cognitive gain; where cognitive gain extends to more than factual accuracy. The culture of receiving literary fiction does comment on whether the ideas of a literary fictional work are plausible. Many works of literary fiction are valued for reasons other than cognitive gain; one such reason is entertainment (take as examples the works of Dumas and Buchan) another might involve aesthetic appreciation. However, the fact that literary fiction is admired for other reasons including the aesthetic appreciation does not entail that the cognitive and aesthetic are mutually exclusive categories. Non-cognitivists are overly restrictive in citing the ways that readers find literary fiction valuable because they exclude the contribution cognitive gain makes to the aesthetic experience of many works. Further, it is not clear why non-cognitivists preclude the development of cognitive powers from the category of intrinsic (non-instrumental) value. As a result, non-cognitivism advances a false conclusion that cognitive value is separate

from the artistic value of a work. Non-cognitivists overlook the aesthetic effectiveness of a literary work in communicating cognitive gain; for instance the author's careful selection of an apt word or image. I shall argue in section (4.7) that the success of literary devices in communicating cognitive gain often depends on the author's skill and innovation.

This chapter has shown three important things. First, that a more careful case is required to explain the role of the reader's engagement with literary fiction as literature. Secondly, the literary cognitivist has to respond to a fourfold sceptical challenge posed by literary anti-cognitivism. Thirdly, the literary cognitivist needs to provide a positive account as to how the reader's engagement with literary devices affects his or her aesthetic appreciation of literary fiction in order to defeat literary non-cognitivism. Let us move to a more positive account of the literary cognitivist position in the remaining three chapters. First by explaining what is meant by 'cognitive gain'.

Chapter Three: Understanding Others

from Understanding Literary Fiction

Literary cognitivists claim that there is cognitive value to reading literary fiction. Candidates for cognitive value are numerous and include: truth, knowledge, understanding, insight, revelation, disclosure and illumination (Walsh 1969: 3). Of these candidates, understanding is the choice of a great many literary cognitivists (Novitz 1987: 77-88; Graham 1997: 28, 49; Elgin: 2002: 1; Kivy 1997: 135; Kieran 2003: 69; Gibson 2007: 143-144; Landy 2012: 12-13). The claim that understanding is the appropriate cognitive benefit in question is supported by the limited empirical evidence. Consider how the cognitive achievement is described in the surveys cited by Pettersson (2012: 171-177). The 1979 survey conducted by Hintzenberg, Schmidt & Zobel showed that 60.5% of the 1057 readers asked said that 'engaging with human problems' provided a very strong motivation for reading 'literature'; while 57.3% read in order to 'compare opinions and attitudes with those of others'. Charlton and associates (2001) recorded that 58% of the 1025 readers surveyed return to literature because 'themes give impulse to reflection' and 57.9% to 'learn about other people'.

On my asking a small sample of readers whether they thought they had learnt anything from reading poetry, novels or plays, one reader referred to understanding directly when she said that she understood social hypocrisy better from reading Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*. Another said she 'saw in clearer terms' how miscommunication in various forms can lead to tragedy from reading Euripides's *Hippolytus* and a third said he 'grasped' how rejection could affect people from reading Steinbeck's *East of Eden*. 'Engaging with problems', 'comparing attitudes', 'reflecting on themes', 'seeing in clearer terms' and 'grasping' seems to fit 'developing a better understanding' more than 'acquiring knowledge'. Despite frequent mention, little attempt has been made by philosophers of literature to specify exactly what is meant by 'understanding'.

Unfortunately, contemporary epistemology offers no consensus as to the nature of understanding so I need to make my own suggestion; such an account can only be 'work in progress' given the constraints of this project. I take as my starting point the fact that there are disparate things to understand as well as different ways in which they may be

understood. I understand: Brownian motion, alpacas, that it is never too late to change; I am able to reach a mutual understanding, thank someone for being understanding and understand that it is not the done thing to slurp soup in public. One epistemologist identifies the scope of understanding as covering at least the following: rules, reasons, actions, passions, objectives, obstacles, techniques, tools, forms, functions, fictions, facts, pictures, words, equations, diagrams (Elgin 1993: 14).

In this chapter, I am interested in our understanding of human thought and action. Section (3.1) sets the scene with some introductory comments on what we do when we understand each other better, what constitutes the domain of interpersonal understanding and sets out two cognitive benefits of a common sense psychological description of this domain. I offer a grammar of ‘understanding’ in section (3.2) which preserves the uneven contours and curious features of the landscape. This provides a lexicon for the rest of the project. As we shall see, various uses of ‘understanding’ correspond to various senses of ‘knowledge’ (there is one exception) although not all of these uses are pertinent to literary cognitivism. Section (3.2) offers a disjunctive statement suggesting various senses of ‘understanding’ relevant to the literary cognitivist argument. Section (3.3) focusses on understanding literary fiction exclusively and elaborates on what I mean by close analysis. I start to make the case that close analysis of a literary fictional text can generate understanding in the senses previously identified (this work is carried on in Chapter Four with specific examples from literature). Chapter Three ends with some discussion of two potential criticisms: first, that close reading is an *elitist* pursuit (section 3.4); secondly that reading literary fiction is *subjective* so does not count as genuine cognitive gain (section 3.5).

3.1 Understanding human thought and action

Underpinning this section is the well-rehearsed contrast between explanation and understanding, traditionally represented by the German terms ‘Erklären’ and ‘Verstehen’ respectively (for example Heal: 1998: 84; 2003: 2). These terms convey the sense of being given an explanation in contrast to developing an understanding. The acts of providing an explanation and developing an understanding are compatible, but these terms have been borrowed by philosophers to signify two distinctive traditions in cognitive gain: the technical or theoretical, represented by ‘Erklären’, and understanding the often idiosyncratic thought and action of human beings, represented by ‘Verstehen’. Many

contemporary philosophers endorse the Erklären/Verstehen distinction, for example Jane Heal says there is no continuum from explaining mechanical or biological complexity to understanding another person's outlook on the world and consequently why a person acts in such a way: 'We do not deal with our family members, friends, colleagues or fellow citizens as we do with volcanoes, fields of wheat or kitchen mixers, namely by trying to figure out the nature and layout of their innards so that we can predict and perhaps control them' (Heal 1998: 97). Rather our interpersonal understanding represents a different kind of understanding; though not *sui generis* as we may come to understand another species along the same lines.

There are at least two ways in which our understanding of human thought and action are marked out. First, we need to take account of the inter-connectedness of multiple beliefs; referred to as a 'holism of the mental' (Heal 1986: 136). Heal says: 'There is no clear upper bound on the number of different beliefs or desires that a person may have. And, worse, we cannot lay down in advance that for a given state these and only these others could be relevant to what its originating conditions and outcomes are' (Heal 1986: 136). Secondly, it is not clear how we can understand human thought and action in terms of neat causal laws so a different approach is required (Heal 2003: 12-13). I will argue alongside those philosophers in the Verstehen tradition that the realm of human thought and action benefits from a broader conception of understanding than an exclusively theoretical or scientific approach permits.

This section starts with the Aristotelian account of understanding in order to introduce the reader to the kind of activity that takes place when we understand human thought and action effectively. I take an example from Wittgenstein's *Notes on Fraser's Golden Bough* of the kind of thing we seek to understand and borrow two arguments in favour of a common sense psychological approach from the work of Kathleen V. Wilkes. I should point out that in the course of this discussion nothing hangs on the architecture of Aristotle's epistemology, the terminology of Wittgenstein or the anomalous monist stance of Wilkes in the philosophy of mind debate. I do not need to commit to any of these positions to make the points I make concerning how we understand each other better, the kind of thing we come to understand and the ways we have developed to describe what we understand. This section provides important groundwork for my contention that literary fiction describes human thought and action in a way that carries certain cognitive benefits. I hope to make this cognitive gain explicit in the succeeding sections.

In one of the earliest accounts of understanding Aristotle says the following:

There is also understanding, and good understanding, the qualities in virtue of which people are said to be understanding and of good understanding. They are not entirely the same as <scientific> knowledge or opinion (for then everyone would be understanding), nor is it one of the particular sciences, such as medicine, which deals with health, or geometry, which deals with spatial magnitudes. For understanding is concerned not with things that are eternal and immutable, nor with any and everything that comes into being, but with matters that may cause perplexity and call for deliberation. Hence its sphere is the same as that of prudence; but understanding and prudence are not the same, because prudence is imperative (since its end is what one should or should not do), and understanding only makes judgements.

(Nicomachean Ethics VI. 10. 1142b31, trans. Thomson, J.A.K.)

At least three details are noteworthy in this passage. First, that the kind of understanding (Sunesis) in question is not identical to scientific knowledge though Aristotle's use of 'entirely' admits that the understanding in question is compatible with scientific knowledge. Secondly, that understanding is neither theoretical and abstract nor contingent and particular but transcends this dichotomy. Thirdly, that understanding is related to Phronesis (practical wisdom) though lacks the moral imperative of Phronesis.

The distinction between Sophia (theoretical wisdom) and Phronesis (practical wisdom) is well documented in commentaries on *(Nicomachean Ethics VI. 8-11)* so I shall rehearse the contrast only briefly. While both Sophia and Phronesis are cognitive achievements, theoretical wisdom is: more akin to propositional knowledge, something finished, exclusively concerned with universals, only deductive, abstract and judged on its own merits. Practical wisdom, contrariwise, is: more like ability knowledge, on-going, concerned with particulars as well as universals, uses both deduction and induction, relates to a wide range of fields (legislative, administrative, judicial, deliberative, economics, physical fitness and household management) and involves auxiliary concepts such as resourcefulness, correct deliberation, understanding, judgement, cleverness and being scrupulous. For Aristotle, Phronesis is preceded by the process of appraising a situation for oneself and appraising a person's description of a situation (Sunesis). Sunesis is translated

as ‘understanding’ but has the particular sense of seeing the point in something, coming to a reasonable judgement over an issue or sizing something up.

In her paper ‘Practical Wisdom: a mundane account’ Rosalind Hursthouse draws our attention to the role of Sunesis and the importance of reading the situation correctly before reaching any judgement or performing any action:

We should, I think, allow ourselves to be struck by how *often* finding out exactly what ‘the situation’ is, with a view to acting well, involves judging what other people say, particularly about their own, or someone else’s, actions and/or feelings, past, present or future. It is an absolutely indispensable part of knowing one’s way about in the human world, which is a world of language-using creatures.

(Hursthouse 2006: 291 italics in original)

This particular form of understanding prior to making a decision and performing an action may be called ‘understanding’, ‘comprehension’ or just ‘getting a situation right’. Aristotle’s discussion of Sunesis though slim in the text is worth closer examination. The process of sizing up a situation involves arranging the information one has gathered in such a way as to make sense of that information. This is an intellectual activity involving ‘puzzling over and deliberation’ (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI. 10. 1143a5). The phrase ‘puzzling over’ is sometimes translated as ‘questioning’ (for differing translations see Irwin 1999: 95; Crisp 2000: 113; Rowe and Broadie 2002: 185). There is a parallel with philosophising here in so far as both philosophy and Sunesis involves the marshalling of material to make an overall case coherent. Yet deliberation is not the theoretical exercise referred to in Book Three of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and is described as context sensitive (Wiggins 1980: 236-237). Much of what Aristotle says about Sunesis in Book VI, Chapter 10 is negative in nature: Sunesis is not exactly the same as knowledge or judgement, otherwise anyone with a little knowledge or anyone who makes a judgement would be ‘comprehending’. Sunesis is not limited to any single area of investigation. Sunesis is not concerned with universal truths nor contingent facts. Sunesis is not like having or acquiring wisdom.

As for the positive account of Sunesis, Aristotle emphasises that understanding entails an active process of working things out. Learning is a broad term covering both the committing of facts to memory as well as active discovery. The contrast between these kinds of learning is implicit in the way we talk: one is given an explanation but comes to or reaches an understanding. ‘Manthanein’, the Greek word for the latter kind of learning,

conveys a sense that the process of cognitive gain is on-going just as when I advise someone to eat healthily I mean that they should continue to heed the advice. The process of coming to understand involves making mistakes, rearranging the material by trial and error, seeing how something develops over time and acquainting oneself with territories related to what is understood. Engaging in a process of discovery as opposed to being fed propositional knowledge seems to put the cognitive agent at a distinct advantage in passing a common test for understanding, namely whether one is able to apply what is understood to new and challenging situations. There are benefits in using, rather than just accruing, the material.

This process of Sunesis as ‘getting a better sense of p’ or ‘forming a considered judgement of p’ takes place in many everyday contexts. The same process is at work when we take into account other people’s testimonies or reports of an incident or person. In her discussion of Sunesis and Eusunesia (excellence in this form of understanding) Hursthouse says:

People with such knowledge have a better understanding of other people than the inexperienced, and can make better judgements than them about more than the genuineness of expressions of feeling. They have a perceptual capacity, ‘perceptiveness’ or ‘sensitivity’, to see or hear that, despite a smiling front, others are hurt, embarrassed, uncertain, angry, frightened, worried, or that their apparent shiftiness or brazenness is no more than embarrassment, that their expression of gratitude, though awkward, is genuine, or.... This is the perceptual capacity that Nussbaum has discussed and vividly illustrated, and rightly so. Like comprehension, it is a capacity absolutely requisite for finding out what ‘the situation’ is in many central cases in which action is called for.

(Hursthouse 2006: 297)

The motivation for Sunesis, as Aristotle points out, is not to manipulate others but to understand fellow humans better which is rewarding in itself.

The sphere of interpersonal understanding

Wittgenstein famously said that: ‘What has to be accepted, the given, is - so one could say - *forms of life*’ (*Philosophical Investigations* II. Xi. 226e italics in original). ‘Forms of life’

or ‘Lebensformen’ may also be translated as ‘ways of life’ and encompasses how an individual or group of individuals think and feel about the world as well as how such a world-view is manifest in verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Marie McGinn draws our attention to the fact that ‘form of life’ for Wittgenstein is a matter of culture rather than biology in the following passage:

The idea of a form of life applies rather to historical groups of individuals who are bound together into a community by a shared set of complex, language-involving practices. These practices are grounded in biological needs and capacities, but insofar as these are mediated and transformed by a set of intricate, historically-specific language-games, our human form of life is fundamentally *cultural* (rather than biological) in nature. Coming to share, or understand, the form of life of a group of individual human beings means mastering, or coming to understand, the intricate language-games that are essential to its characteristic practices. It is this vital connection between language and the complex system of practices and activities binding a community together that Wittgenstein intends to emphasize in the concept of a ‘form of life’.

(McGinn 2006: 51)

It seems natural for us to be curious about how others view the world, how world-views differ from our own and so seek better ‘interpersonal understanding’.

In the course of his response, Wittgenstein gives many examples of cultural practice that do not fit the scope of scientific study as no scientific account succeeds in helping the onlooker understand the situation better. I shall limit myself to one example, that of kissing a picture, which occurs in the following passage from Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on Fraser’s The Golden Bough*:

Burning in effigy. Kissing the picture of a loved one. This is obviously *not* based on a belief that it will have a definite effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at some satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather, it does not *aim* at anything; we act in this way and then feel satisfied.

One could also kiss the name of the loved one, and here the representation by the name would be clear.

(Wittgenstein 2010: 4e italics in original)

The question is how best to gain interpersonal understanding? Wittgenstein declares in an earlier comment:

We can only *describe* and say, “Human life is like that.”

(Wittgenstein 2010: 3e. Italics in original)

Wittgenstein’s target in these notes was *The Golden Bough* (1890) by Cambridge anthropologist James Fraser which criticised cultural practices as though such practices were the result of misguided scientific beliefs. I argue, along with Wittgenstein and other philosophers in the *Verstehen* tradition, that a great deal of human action (planting a tree in remembrance, Morris dancing and party political broadcasts) is best understood in cultural rather than scientific terms.

Common sense psychological description

In her paper ‘The Relationship between Scientific Psychology and Common Sense Psychology’ (1991) Kathleen V. Wilkes argues that common sense descriptions of human thought and action enjoy explanatory power. Her target is the eliminative materialism of (Churchland 1981 and Stich 1983). In rehearsing Wilkes’s argument, I am not defending anomalous monism as a position in the philosophy of mind, eliminativists may well be correct in their view that common sense talk of mental states are incapable of explaining what consciousness is.²⁵ I am interested in the argument that there is cognitive gain in describing human thought and action in an everyday, unscientific way. Wilkes draws a sharp distinction between scientific psychology and what she terms ‘common sense psychology’ where we cannot judge common sense psychology by the standards of scientific psychology. The mistake made by critics of common sense psychology is to view this form of description as commensurable with the scientific.

According to Wilkes, both common sense psychology and scientific psychology purport to explain and predict. However, scientific psychology, unlike common sense psychology, ‘wants to do this *systematically*’ (Wilkes 1991: 20). A systematic investigation involves showing how entities may be expressed as natural kinds and how a given phenomenon ‘comes under’ a general explanation. Common sense psychology may classify things too

²⁵ For further discussion see (Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson 1996: 240-242).

(kisses may be lingering, tender, tentative or disinhibited) but classifies things in a looser way. Wilkes gives the following example:

[Common sense psychology] is no more interested in natural kinds than a cook or a churchgoer is interested in the close species relationship between garlic and lilies, which undoubtedly engages the interests of biologists. (Wilkes 1991: 20)

Further differences between scientific psychology and common sense psychology are identified in Wilkes's paper and I shall rehearse them briefly here. Common sense psychology does not strive for precise laws just loose rules of thumb (1991: 22). These 'rough and handy rules of thumb' are more like the rules of friendship where it is expected, but never stated explicitly, that friends remember each other's birthdays. Wilkes points out that it is an ambition of science that 'experiments and observations should be repeatable' but this ambition is not shared by common sense psychology (1991: 23); it does not help my understanding of why that person kissed a name in a letter if they were to perform this action again. Findings in scientific psychology aim to be context-transcendent while this is not an ambition of common sense psychology (1991: 24). Scientific psychology aspires to methodological rigour (1991: 24) while no such aspiration exists in common sense psychology; I cannot envisage asking someone 'how they are' in a methodologically rigorous way without this being off putting. Common sense psychology, unlike scientific psychology, enjoys many purposes: 'joking, jeering, exhorting, discouraging, blaming, insulting, evaluating, advertising, hinting' (1991: 25) to name just a few.

The differences identified by Wilkes further illuminate the view that common sense psychology and scientific psychology provide very different approaches and that common sense psychology enjoys autonomy from scientific psychology. Common sense psychology is at work when we seek better interpersonal understanding. One implication of this discussion is that there is a false entailment from stating that common sense psychology is ill-equipped to offer any kind of explanation as to the nature of consciousness, to the conclusion that common sense psychology has no explanatory power at all. Paul Churchland says:

The FP [folk psychology] of the Greeks is essentially the FP we use today, and we are negligibly better at explaining human behaviour in its terms than was Sophocles. This is a very long period of stagnation and infertility for any theory to

display, especially when faced with such an enormous backlog of anomalies and mysteries in its own explanatory domain.

(Churchland 1981: 74-75).

The important contrast is between scientific psychology and common sense psychology so, for the sake of argument, we can take ‘folk psychology’ and ‘common sense psychology’ to be equivalent (cf. Wilkes 1991: 16). Churchland is right to say that we can offer a better scientific psychological analysis than Sophocles owing to the progress of science but he is not right to say that we can offer a better interpersonal analysis of human life and love because of the progress of science.

That interpersonal understanding is a different enterprise to our seeking a scientific, psychological understanding does not mean that on some occasions the two enterprises of scientific and interpersonal understanding never inform each other. I am not advocating some form of anti-scientific obscurantism and neither is Wilkes (see her comments on how scientific psychology is central to our understanding depression 1991: 33); only that the two cognitive processes are distinctive. One example of constructive and consistent inter-permeation between the scientific and interpersonal understanding occurs in social anthropology. Some critics of the literary turn in social anthropology complained that literary descriptions and literary allusions compromised the serious standing of their subject and advocated a return to the exclusively empirical (e.g. Crapanzano 1986: 58).²⁶ For others the literary turn in social anthropology and its empirical backlash represented a false dichotomy:

Explaining cultural representations, interpreting them: two autonomous tasks that contribute to our understanding of cultural phenomena. Both can achieve relevance, but in opposite ways: the more general an explanation, the more relevant it is; what makes an interpretation relevant, on the other hand, is not its generality but its depth, that is its faithfulness to the nexus of mental representations that lies under any particular human behavior. Even though they make a lesser use of imagination and a greater one of experience, ethnographers achieve relevance in the manner of novelists...

(Sperber 1982: 34)

²⁶ ‘The literary turn’ occurred in three waves (Geertz 1973; Shostak 1981; Luhrmann 1996).

Disagreement between social anthropologists as to the nature of their subject should not detain us further and are too parochial to damage my thesis. What should detain us further is the exact cognitive gain promised in the domain of interpersonal understanding. The autonomy of common sense psychology from scientific psychology²⁷ does not make the case for cognitive gain but points to how such a case may be made and we shall take up this challenge for the rest of this section.

In the course of her paper ‘The Relationship between Scientific Psychology and Common Sense Psychology’ (1991) Wilkes suggests two further ways in which common sense, non-scientific psychology may help develop our interpersonal understanding. First, a common sense, non-scientific psychological description is generally tailored to a particular individual in a particular situation and as a consequence contributes an understanding that is missed by generality:

CSP [common sense psychology] and SP [scientific psychology] are both concerned to explain and predict the behaviour of humans and other animals. But after that anodyne point, the similarities end. SP attempts to explain and predict *generally*. CSP however is interested in explaining the *particular*. George wants to know why his daughter Georgina has become a skinhead, a mathematics professor, or a born-again Christian, rather than why teenagers are tempted to become skinheads, to take up mathematics, or to get waylaid by fundamentalism. And, he would have a much better chance of finding a satisfactory explanation if he looked to the specificities of Georgina’s individual history – which as her father he probably knows rather well rather than if he resorted to his local university collection in psychology (which is not to say that he would not find indirect help there for his researches...).

(Wilkes 1991: 19-20)

Wilkes grants inter-permeation between scientific psychology and common sense psychology but maintains that the application of general scientific laws can miss the full and fine detail required for a thorough grasp of a situation. Georgina, in becoming a skinhead may be making a religious, political or fashion statement none of which fall under neat causal laws. Donald Davidson (2001b: 233) argues that innumerable considerations are relevant to human thought and action to the extent that it is impossible

²⁷ A claim made elsewhere in the literature on anomalous monism (Davidson 1980; Horgan & Woodward 1985).

to state such considerations a priori or formulate any neat causal laws that govern the phenomena.

Secondly, Wilkes contends that our common sense, non-scientific descriptive language has evolved to portray subtle and nuanced distinctions in human action and behaviour. So, for example, my choice of ‘taciturn’ over ‘speechless’, ‘quiet’ or ‘dried up’ plays an important communicative role in my communicating what I see in other people. Wilkes makes the case as follows:

One reason for the success of CSP [Common Sense Psychology] is the riotous richness of the framework. We can exploit overlapping shades of meaning, nuances, and ambiguities, to convey accurately and precisely whatever we want. We can explain behaviour by citing wanting, wishing, desiring, craving, hoping, lusting after, longing for; all in context these may convey quite different implications. And, as we have already seen, since CSP explanations are typically of specific actions of specific agents at specific times, they all belong to an equally specific and individual context. Consider the size of Roget’s *Thesaurus* and then consider what proportion of it is given over to ‘mental’ terms - a colossal proportion. Consider, too, how few of these terms have sharp definitions. It is precisely because they are free of such – they are in fact amorphous and nuance-ridden – that they enjoy the flexibility and richness that allows us to wield them to such effect in a given context. The richness of the context ensures that what is conveyed is precise, accurate, and economical.

(Wilkes 1991: 22 -23)

My contention is that Wilkes’s arguments can be applied a fortiori to literary fiction qua literature. Wilkes does not comment on literary fiction directly as she says any mundane example of common sense psychological description will do just as well as an example (1991: 18). However, in the course of her discussion she cites ‘the lasting appeal’ of Homer, Euripides, Chaucer, Proust, Dostoevsky and Henry James (1991: 17-18) which suggests she acknowledges such a link. In the final paragraphs I intend to make this link clearer.

Noel Carroll defends the literary author's powers of critical observation as follows:

... the realist novelist as a young artist makes the ability to dissect society part of his curriculum. By the time he is mature, if everything has worked out well, he *is* an expert in social affairs. Moreover, it needs to be added that with many of the things for which realist authors possess an expert eye – such as the emerging signs of status, the daily intrigues of micro-power, the ways of the heart, everyday anxiety, or the emerging claims of social justice – it is scarcely clear exactly whom the better experts might be.

(Carroll 2007: 36)

These lines remind me of William McCready's description of his close friend Charles Dickens who he described as having 'a clutching eye'. This eye for detail does not involve technical expertise, and is all the better for that, but involves the power of keen social observation. While the reader may well have noticed something of what is documented from their experience of the world beyond the literary work, this reader may not have noticed what is recorded in such detail, made certain connections, drawn out certain consequences nor described what is before them so appropriately.

Take the following extract from Chapter Eight of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* as an illustration of what I take to be a literary fictional description of human action. The passage describes Santa Battaglia kissing a photograph of her mother which ties in with Wittgenstein's example of kissing a photograph:

'Poor mamma,' Santa said feelingly, giving the picture a loud wet kiss. The grease on the glass that covered the photograph showed the frequency of these little affectionate onslaughts. 'You sure had it hard, kid.' The little black coals of Sicilian eyes glared almost animatedly at Santa from the snapshot.' The only picture of you I got, mamma, and you standing in a alley. Ain't that a shame.'

Santa sighed at the unfairness of it all and slammed the picture down on the mantelpiece among the bowl of wax fruit and the bouquet of paper zinnias and the

statue of the Virgin Mary and the figurine of the infant of Prague. Then she went back to the kitchen to get some ice cubes and one of the kitchen chairs.

(Kennedy Toole 1981: 193-194)

Read in a casual way, paying attention only to what happens in the story, such a description merely sets out how a female character kisses a photograph of her mother then returns to her household chores. Read in a close way, the reader is informed by omniscient narration that Santa Battaglia is a feeling, affectionate and somewhat forceful individual. Forcefulness is conveyed by the words 'onslaughts' and 'slammed' and the potential of Santa's inheriting something of that Sicilian stare. The metaphor of 'little black coals of eyes' suggests potential fire and contrasts with the reference to ice at the end of the passage. Here is a contrast between what is elemental in the context of the mundane. There is also a jarring topic shift between reflection on family and fairness and the functional demands of the kitchen. For Santa, time for such reflection is an indulgence. There is irony in both Santa's Christian name (appearance suggests that she is far from saintly but appearances can deceive) and in the items displayed on her mantelpiece: the photograph, artificial flowers, fruit and devotional statues are all substitutes for the real thing. The irony is that Santa is an entirely genuine character and not a fake.

So this is not an unvarnished account of someone kissing a picture but an artfully constructed description which yields significant detail to the reader on close analysis. I suggest that there is a twofoldness in how we read a literary fictional text that is not found in other fictions. On one hand we read to follow the story but on the other hand we analyse how the story is told. In section (3.3) I make the case that reading literary fiction involves more effort than other common sense, non-technical descriptions of human interaction. In consequence, I argue further that it is the reader's engagement with literary fiction as literature that plays the most significant role in coming to a better interpersonal understanding.

On the back of these introductory comments, the cognitive benefits of interpersonal understanding come out as strongly skills based. An individual possessing interpersonal understanding is able to: size up a situation effectively, pick up on significant and often subtle detail through common-sense description and use his or her powers of reflection. Further work is required to distinguish between the kinds of understanding that are at work when we understand each other better. I shall pay particular attention in the next section to

which senses of understanding are appropriate to the context of gaining a better understanding of others through reading a work of literary fiction.

3.2 Five senses of ‘understanding’

Willie Russell’s play *Educating Rita* tells the story of a Liverpool woman returning to education through a course with the Open University. The course on English Literature helps Rita develop her intellectual confidence, curiosity, sensitivity and sophistication in thought and expression. Rita recommends a poetry anthology by Roger McGough to her tutor, Frank, at their first meeting:

RITA I’ll bring y’the book – it’s great

FRANK Thank you

RITA You probably won’t think it’s any good.

FRANK Why?

RITA It’s the sort of poetry you can understand

Rita understands McGough’s poetry in a number of ways: she knows what the words mean, what the jokes or allusions are and what the poem is about. Contrariwise, someone starting a course in literature will find unfamiliar words, opaque themes and obscure references in the poetry favoured by Frank. There are different ways of understanding poetry as there are different ways of understanding a broad range of things that people claim to understand. The important contrast is not between what Frank understands about his poetry and what Rita understands about McGough’s work but between the different ways anyone can be said to understand anything, including poetry. In the following discussion I shall challenge the assumption that understanding refers to a single cognitive process and argue instead that ‘understanding’ is a polysemous and context-sensitive term.

There is a tendency to write about understanding as if it were a single phenomenon and in so doing commit what has been termed ‘the curse of the definite article’ (Chappell 2014: 5). This error occurs when one frames a question in such a way as to preclude the possibility of there being more than one answer. The question ‘what is the meaning of life?’ puts us on the scent of a single quarry, *the* meaning of life, and ignores the possibility

that we might have set a whole herd running. It is telling that the question ‘Is understanding a species of knowledge?’ predominates the virtue epistemologists’ discussion (Zagzebski 2001; Kvanvig 2003: 185-203; Grimm 2006: 515-535; Pritchard 2010: 66-88). Reference to ‘understanding’ in singular terms does not allow for the possibility that ‘understanding’, like ‘knowledge’, has more than one sense. The question ‘Is understanding a species of knowledge?’ should invite the question ‘What senses of understanding and knowledge are we talking about?’

In order to compare and contrast understanding to knowledge, I need to say what is meant by ‘knowledge’. I shall argue, along with ‘most contemporary philosophers,’ that ‘knowledge’ comes in at least three different forms:

For most philosophers today, the paradigm of knowledge is propositional knowledge. Of course most contemporary philosophers are likely to accept that there are other kinds of knowledge too. They may, for example (and these are the two commonest examples), agree that there is also knowledge-how (ability knowledge), or knowledge-what-it’s-like (experiential knowledge); or both. But these, they are likely to say or assume, are marginal or secondary cases; it is propositional knowledge that is primary.

(Chappell 2014: 264)

Knowing who, where, when, which, why and whether are often combined in a category termed ‘knowledge-wh’ and are all instances of propositional knowledge; that is to say what is known can be expressed in a given statement or proposition. There is a sense of understanding that equates with each of these senses of ‘knowledge’. For instance when I say ‘I understand why Bob didn’t apply for that promotion’ I mean that I know the whys and wherefores. This does not mean that propositional knowledge alone accounts for understanding in these circumstances as we shall see from the first three cases of understanding below. There is a further honorific sense of understanding that involves applying certain skills to the body of propositions in order to achieve a better understanding. In this honorific case ‘to understand’ refers to ‘know how’. There are also cases where ‘to understand’ refers to experiential knowledge.

I only want to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that there are different forms of knowledge and understanding in our language and thinking. I need not commit to any metaphysical claims about the relations between types of knowledge, between types of understanding and between types of knowledge and understanding; for instance that

knowledge-how is really knowledge-that (Stanley and Williamson 2001) or that knowledge-that is really knowledge-how. In what follows I maintain that know-how is different from propositional knowledge. For one thing, the contrast between knowledge that and knowledge how is too rich for me to describe one form of knowledge in terms of the other. At the same time I do not have space to document the various interesting differences between these classifications of knowledge, for instance that knowledge that need not entail knowledge how or that knowledge how comes in degrees but knowledge that does not. Lastly, by way of introductory comment, there are cases where ‘my understanding of something’ does not equate to knowledge at all but rather involves the forming of an interpretation. My sole purpose, in what follows, is to provide a fuller account of the senses of ‘understanding’ than is otherwise available in order to identify which senses of understanding are relevant to the cognitive gain from reading literary fiction.

‘Understanding’ as propositional knowledge

There is a sense of understanding that equates to propositional knowledge so I might say: ‘I understand how the heart works’ meaning ‘I know that the heart works like a pump’. If one really knows that the heart is a pump then one is able to explain what this proposition means in more than one way and talk convincingly about it. As is the case with knowledge, my understanding that the heart is a pump cannot be based on the parroting of facts or guesswork but, properly construed, requires that I accept certain facts and can provide justification for my acceptance.

While a sense of understanding equates to ‘knowledge that’, there is a kind of brute and boring fact that we may be said to know but where to substitute ‘understand’ would alter the meaning. Consider:

‘I understand that it is 9.30 am’

The use of ‘understand’ sounds tentative as if the speaker were not sure of the time but seeking confirmation.²⁸ The fact that ‘understand’ is misplaced in this sentence, given the speaker knows the correct time, may be explained by the prevalence of the honorific sense of ‘understand’. We generally choose the term ‘understand’ on occasions when there is an

²⁸ In this instance, the sense of understanding relates to ‘forming an interpretation’, see below.

impressive cognitive gain involved, and this renders the use of ‘understand’ incongruous when there doesn’t seem to be anything more to the cognitive process than the registering of a fact. That the statement ‘I understand that it is 9.30 am’ sounds either wrong or tentative does not undermine the claim that sometimes ‘understand’ means ‘to know a fact’.

In recent years, virtue epistemologists have granted a higher, honorific status to understanding as being more comprehensive than knowledge (Elgin 1993: 14; 2007: 44; Cooper 1994: 3-5; Zagzebski 2001: 244; 2009: 6-7; 141-9; Riggs 2003: 214-215; Kvanvig 2003: 186, 192-193; Pritchard 2008: 335; Grimm 2012: 103-117). I am sympathetic to the idea that some forms of understanding are more comprehensive than some forms of knowledge; it is only that virtue epistemologists do not give us the full picture when it comes to what might count as understanding. If one form of understanding is the same as a form of knowledge then developing that form of understanding cannot be better than the corresponding form of knowledge. While my account cannot come close to an exhaustive account of ‘understanding’, the analysis does enough to show the diversity of cognitive gain at work when someone understands something better. It comes as no surprise that someone who navigates through a complex of data, or someone else who is able to ask insightful questions on the back of such data, or add non-propositional elements, does more than gather and regurgitate the data. Hence it is right to award some forms of understanding with an honorific status.

While many readers gain propositional knowledge from literary fiction, I may learn about Regency etiquette from reading *Pride and Prejudice* or learn that it is true of the fiction that Mrs Bennett has five children; such cognitive gain does not seem the basis for a fitting or interesting defence of literary cognitivism. A cognitivist can concede to the literary anti-cognitivist that propositional knowledge is better learnt from a specialist source; after all a sociologist or historian treat fictional cases as very different kinds of evidence about the attitudes people held at a given time. Yet this concession does not compromise the literary cognitivist case. The kind of understanding identified here, understanding as propositional knowledge, is secondary or even coincidental to other cognitive gain from literary fiction.

So we can say:

- When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding they may mean ‘understanding’ as synonymous with discrete propositional

knowledge but are more likely to mean understanding in some other sense such as the exercising of certain skills.

‘Understanding’ as ‘knowing what is meant by’

Understanding what someone means, for instance when they say ‘it is raining cats and dogs’ is a case of knowing that they mean ‘there is a lot of rain falling with force’. In some circumstances, there is more to understand from the pragmatic context of the utterance. Ordinary language provides a paradigm, for example when I say:

‘Martina understands what Martin said’

I mean

‘Martina knows what Martin said’

Martina, a native Czech speaker learning English, can understand what Martin said in the basic sense of knowing what the words in a sentence mean. Martina’s sister, who has no English, would not know what the sentence means. If Martina’s sister has a keen enough ear then she may be able to repeat the words accurately so ‘knows’ or ‘understands’ what was said in this more fundamental respect. Martina’s understanding of what was said, in some cases, may not be sufficient for her to be said to *really* understand what was said. What makes understanding in the semantic sense interesting is the potential to grasp layers of meaning that may surround the statement and which the speaker intends the listener to be aware of. We talk about ‘reading between the lines’- meaning one possesses an awareness of the context not just the literal meaning of what is said - and here we have a case of ‘understanding between the lines’. Martina really understands what Martin said if she grasps that what was said is an allusion, pun or secret message. Martina may also understand something more about what Martin said if she is able to judge that an office in-joke was particularly well used on that occasion. If Martina understands all of these things in addition to what is stated directly we can call the cognitive gain a ‘fuller’ or ‘more thorough’ understanding.

William Tolhurst (1979) provides some helpful analysis when he argues that what an utterance means cannot always be solely determined by reference to the word sequence meaning of that utterance and that an important role is played on occasion by what an

utterer means by his or her use of a linguistic token. The comment ‘nice trousers’ may be used as a compliment or as a sarcastic jibe where nothing in the word sequence gives an audience any clue as to which meaning is apt. In these cases, and they need not be sophisticated literary cases, the audience needs to know something about the authorial intention, recognise the utterer’s tone, or know something of the context. Tolhurst says:

The difficulty which I have had in understanding a poem such as ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’ by William Carlos Williams has nothing to do with not understanding the meaning of the sentence which the poem instantiates and quite a lot to do with the point or force of the sentence which is given in a specification of its meaning as an utterance.

(Tolhurst 1979: 14)

So understanding what is meant by a word or phrase extends beyond the reader’s understanding the literal meaning of words and includes tone, authorial intention and allusion. Understanding what is meant, in this broader sense, still counts as knowledge that where the kind of tone is possible to articulate.

A basic sense of understanding as ‘knowing what is meant by’ can be gained from reading literary fiction owing to the fact that reading such texts may increase the reader’s vocabulary – but the literary cognitivist’s claim goes further than this sense. A broader understanding of what is meant is a candidate for the kind of cognitive gain at stake so let us add:

- When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding they do not mean ‘understanding’ in the sense of knowing what words in a literary fiction mean, but may mean ‘understanding’ as an awareness of the layers of meaning to be found in a given utterance in the literary fiction.

Understanding as explanation (knowing why something happened)

In spite of the historical distinction drawn between Verstehen (understanding) and Erklären (explanation) there is a sense of understanding that equates to ‘being able to offer an explanation’. This third type of understanding, as explanation, is prominent in the philosophy of science and tends to refer to a causal history or to general laws or some

combination of causal history and laws. Peter Lipton says of the causal model of explanation: ‘Understanding is not some sort of super-knowledge, but simply more knowledge: knowledge of the phenomenon and knowledge about its causes’ (Lipton 1991: 32). This kind of understanding is an instance of propositional knowledge but includes knowledge of how facts relate in order to enable an individual to know why *p* occurs which is to be able to give an explanation of *p*. There is a further honorific sense of understanding in this context where someone might be praised for offering a good explanation in the sense of not just offering a description of a given system but being able to draw on elements of that system quickly and adroitly (this seems to be an additional case of understanding as know-how, discussed below).

In Wayne Wright’s paper ‘Why Naturalize Consciousness?’ (2007) the author says ‘...there is an authentic, deep form of understanding that comes with a good control explanation’ (2007: 599). A control explanation is one that says: when you have *X* but not *C* then you don’t get *Y*; when you have *X* and *C* then you *do* get *Y*. Wright (2007: 595-598) points out that any *feeling* that one has understood the target phenomenon is not a reliable indicator as to whether genuine comprehension has taken place; that is enjoying ‘a warm glow of satisfaction at having understood *p*’ is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition on understanding *p*. In contrast, being in possession of a good control explanation is both necessary and sufficient for understanding *p*. James Woodward offers a plausible account of a good control explanation in his *Making Things Happen*. Woodward’s manipulationist conception of explanation focusses on control and manipulation ‘...the distinguishing feature of causal explanations, so conceived, is that they are explanations that furnish information that is potentially relevant to manipulation and control; they tell us how, if we were able to change the value of one or more variables, we could change the value of other variables’ (Woodward 2003: 6). So one understands why something happens if one is able to make it happen or stop it from happening.

This account of explanation works in individual as well as general cases. Old Fred ‘understands’ the idiosyncrasies of his tractor because he is able to explain how *he* works *his* tractor, for instance by turning the starter motor in a certain way. The test for this third type of understanding, understanding as explanation, is the ability to *apply* knowledge to different settings. The evidence that old Fred really understands tractors is the fact that people from all over the county bring their temperamental machines to his workshop. Understanding as knowing why something happened tends to apply, though is not exclusive to, scientific or technical fields.

I agree that there is a form of understanding where being able to offer an explanation is sufficient to gain said understanding and that a good control explanation is sufficient for an explanation but I do not think, as Wright seems to suggest, that this is the only form of understanding available. It is hard to see what work control explanations would do in understanding literary fiction. Nevertheless, there seems to be common ground between understanding as explanation and the reader gaining understanding from literary fiction in three important respects. First, what is understood from a literary work tends to involve seeing a fuller picture. Secondly, someone may be said to understand the fuller picture better if they are able to navigate quickly and adeptly around the fuller picture (navigation is discussed separately below). Thirdly, the understanding gained from literary sources tends to involve the ability to reason about similar cases. Hence we can add:

- When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding they can mean that reading literary fiction encourages the reader to set out and navigate a body of propositions and apply the understanding accrued to similar cases.

Understanding as knowledge how

There is a fourth sense of ‘understanding’ which equates to ‘knowledge how’ or ‘know-how’. What is meant by know-how? Person S has know-how if he or she is able to exercise some competence when called upon. I stipulate that knowledge how enjoys the accompanying competence to avoid the following kind of counter examples:

...a ski instructor may know how to perform a certain complex stunt, without being able to perform it herself. Similarly, a master pianist who loses both of her arms in a tragic car accident still knows how to play the piano.

(Stanley and Williamson 2001: 6).

There is a common use of ‘understand’, for instance when someone nods and says ‘I understand what to do’ where the person indicates that he or she knows what to do and is competent to get on and do it. I favour ‘competence’ over ‘ability’ as the former term covers what can be learnt and carried out, and this is what I take the term to mean, whereas ‘ability’ carries the connotation of some innate talent. Of course, there may be cases where an innate talent, having a nose for something, influences our understanding. For example, a

poet may understand when to stop honing a verse where such understanding may be the result of a feel for the creative process as well as experience. In adding ‘when called upon’ I mean that competences aren’t performed by accident or luck. There are instances where one calls upon one’s own competences.

Many competences are practical in nature: I may know how to canoe, shoe a horse or tie my shoe laces. Understanding as know-how presents an opportunity to perform a task competently or with degrees of efficiency. I understand how to shoe a horse efficiently, for example, when I possess strength and dexterity, effective timing, ingenuity when faced with a testing or unfamiliar situation and a sense of when to give a reassuring scratch to the horse. It seems, and I am aware that this is a separate debate, that being able to describe what one should do propositionally is not the whole story here. Other competences are not so hands on and refer to epistemic skills applied to a body of propositions. I know how or understand how to call default assumptions into question when I use the Socratic Method effectively. In many cases, understanding in the sense of knowing how to do something will cover a range of practical competence and epistemic skills. For instance, when I navigate with a map I read the map and know how to use a compass. Interpreting a literary text is sometimes referred to as ‘practical criticism’. This description suggests commonality between the skills exercised when we read a poem, play or extract of literary prose and skills exercised in the practical sphere. The label ‘practical criticism’ invites us to look at this activity as something broader than the exercise of epistemic skills and instead as a case where practical and epistemic skills exist together.

What skills does the close reading of a literary work require? This question is dealt with in section (3.3) and in Chapter Four below. In the meantime, take the passage quoted earlier in Chapter One as representative, where Elgin says: ‘We already have a vast store of information at our disposal. But a jumble of disorderly data has little cognitive value...Advancement of understanding then involves finding order in or imposing order on the information at hand’ (Elgin 1996: 189). Elsewhere Elgin gives some examples of how ‘finding order in or imposing order on the information at hand’ might be manifested:

By calling default assumptions into question, and developing, entertaining and invoking alternatives to them, we may come better to understand a subject. Reorganizing a domain in terms of different kinds, highlighting hitherto ignored aspects of it, developing and deploying new approaches to it, and setting ourselves

new challenges with respect to it are among the ways we increase our understanding. (Elgin 2002: 3)

Yet while exercising particular competences efficiently may be sufficient for understanding in some cases, there are also cases where exercising particular competences are not sufficient for a genuine understanding.

Consider the example of Person J who is a reliable but uncomprehending student of mathematics. J is diligent and follows his teacher's instructions in class and as a result he gets good marks in his homework which follows the same format as his classwork. The problem is that despite performing all the correct mathematical functions in the correct sequence, when representing trigonometry graphically for instance, J does not really know why he is doing what he is doing. He comes unstuck one day when his usual teacher is ill and another teacher sets a different kind of problem though one which could be solved if J were to use the mathematical skills acquired in a different way. J fails in this task for a number of reasons: he does not have an overview of 'the bigger picture', is unable to interpret the new and unfamiliar problem, lacks a sense of salience, gets side-tracked by irrelevancies and lacks the flexibility of thought to understand how to apply what he knows.

There is an analogy here with Alison Hills' line in her *Beloved Self* when she says:

To understand why p, you must have an ability to draw conclusions about similar cases, and to work out when a different conclusion would hold if the reasons why p were no longer the case. If you have this kind of appreciation of moral reasons you must have, at least to some extent, a systematic grasp of morality.

(Hills 2010: 194)

I understand why Felicity stormed out of the party as I know that Darren was up to his old tricks again. If Darren had not been up to his old tricks again then I would need to search for a different explanation. Both examples of the reliable but uncomprehending mathematician and Felicity storming out of the party show that there are higher competences at work (such as the ability to apply know-how) which contribute to a genuine understanding of something. One might enquire as to whether someone possesses these higher competences by asking whether someone *really* understands. Possession of these higher competences fits the two most common metaphors for understanding: having a good grasp of something and knowing one's way around the subject. In the case of the first metaphor, understanding X means having a firm grip on X that is not easily lost when

challenged and which is transferable from one situation to another. In the case of the second metaphor, the higher skill is one of navigation.

These competences are different from standard cases of ‘knowing that’ and look promising for the literary cognitivist case as they may be exercised when reading literary fiction. So we can add:

- When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding they can mean knowledge of how to exercise certain skills or competences when reading a literary text.

Understanding as experiential knowledge

There is a sense of ‘understanding’ that does not equate to propositional knowledge, though it may be expressed as such, but equates to experience as when I say that ‘I understand that Oxford blue is darker than Cambridge blue’ or that ‘the sound that I have just heard was an F flat’. Experience may be expressed as propositional knowledge without any direct acquaintance. A horticulture student may give the correct answer that ‘white currants are less tart than red currants’ without having enjoyed the taste of either fruit; the student ‘understands that’ such and such is a fact. Nevertheless, someone who has the benefit of actual experience, the taste of each fruit, has the greater understanding or at least that a different understanding comes from experience. When I say to someone who is jilted or grieving ‘I understand what you are going through’ or ‘I understand how hard it is’ (I permit these clichés to show the common usage of this sense of understanding) I mean that I have a good idea of what the person is feeling perhaps as the result of having been through a similar experience myself.

How experience is articulated in these cases is significant. Someone who has experienced red and white currants might be hard pushed to describe the different tastes yet can be said to understand that white currants taste in such a way in contrast to the taste of red currants. For the record there are other cases where one’s ability to articulate experience does not matter to the cognitive gain (e.g. understanding musical beat) as well as cases where the articulation of one’s experience is important (e.g. compiling notes when tasting wine). I am interested in how understanding as experience may be put into words in such a way as to convey that experience to those who have not experienced something themselves. Literary

fiction abounds with descriptions of how characters feel, and a literary cognitivist might claim that these passages communicate something of what it is like to experience X.

One literary cognitivist claim is that literary fiction puts experience into words in an effective way so we should add that:

- When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding they can mean the conveyance of what an experience feels like to someone experiencing it.

Understanding as forming an interpretation

There is a further sense of understanding which does not equate to any form of knowledge but rests on the ability to form a plausible interpretation where nothing conclusive can be established: one says ‘my understanding of p is x,y,z’ where ‘understanding’ stands for ‘my reading of the situation is’ or ‘my working hypothesis is’. Take the case of an archaeologist who finds pre-historic animal remains loosely strewn in a circle with a gap of about a metre between two jaw bones placed at the most southerly tip of the circle. The bone fragments are identified as belonging to: owls, wolves, dogs and aurochs (primitive cattle). The archaeologist searches for some understanding of what went on here but the truth as to what once occurred remains lost to us. The archaeologist devises an interpretive hypothesis that makes best sense of the facts. The hypotheses that this was a pre-historic pet cemetery or abattoir are rejected on the grounds that the bones of animals not associated with being a food source or a pet were found. Instead the archaeologist *conjectures* that this was a site where ancient humans venerated both wild and domesticated animals, the entrance of which lay between the jaw bones.

In this example, the archaeologist decides on what ‘understanding’ to take, based on: close attention to detail, whether the interpretation fits the evidence and whether such an interpretation coheres. No information can be revealed sufficient to establish the truth of what really went on at this site. One can variously interpret data, behaviour, idiom or a text. While data is entirely factual, an idiom or a literary fictional text will contain far fewer facts. I shall return to the interpretation of a literary text in section (3.3) below but in order to acknowledge the cognitive gain in forming a plausible hypothesis let us add:

- When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding they can mean that the reader is able to practice formulating interpretive hypotheses from reading literary fiction.

Summary statement

From the discussion above we can make the following set of claims about understanding:

When person S is said to understand x, S either:

1. Knows that 'x' (in one or more of the possible ways to know that) or
2. Knows how to x or
3. Knows what it is like to x or
4. Is able to construct a working hypothesis about x.

In a significant number of cases one talks about S understanding x where S is able to apply know-how to a body of propositions in a particularly proficient way. So an important upshot of my discussion is that understanding as know-how, sense (2) above, plays a consistently important role when we talk about S understanding p.

When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops understanding it is unlikely that they mean 'understanding' as synonymous with knowledge of facts that may be gained just as well as from an extra-literary source. In addition, it is unlikely that literary cognitivists mean 'understanding' in the sense of knowing what the words in a literary fiction mean, though this is a necessary condition on the cognitive gains listed below. These cognitive gains are not at stake in the case of understanding something better from reading literary fiction. When literary cognitivists claim that reading literary fiction develops 'understanding' they can mean one or more of the following:

- i. Understanding as *discerning* the layers of meaning to be found in a given utterance in a literary fiction.
- ii. *Application* of knowledge accrued from literary fiction to similar cases (fictional or non-fictional).
- iii. Knowledge of how to exercise a range of *skills or competences* in reading a literary fiction.

- iv. Knowledge about an *experience*.
- v. Forming a coherent *interpretation* or reading of a literary fiction.

There are still some further details to rehearse in our conceptual grammar before we move on to a more detailed account of how a reader of literary fiction exercises these forms of understanding.

Lack of understanding and misunderstanding

Lack of understanding means the absence of one or more sense of understanding; lack of understanding may mean that I do not know that the heart is a pump or do not know how to tie a bowline knot. In cases of misunderstanding, something stands in place of a correct understanding. I might mistakenly understand when I loop a rope into a 'b' shape rather than a 'd' shape when starting a bowline. In this type of case, the false belief or misconception needs to be challenged and put right in order to gain proper understanding. In other cases of misunderstanding, where an individual 'gets the wrong end of the stick', the context has been missed. Take, for example, a child who says that the opposite of white is brown rather than black. While lack of understanding and misunderstanding are distinguishable; the two are related when the lack of understanding allows room for a misunderstanding to take place. Emma Woodhouse lacks understanding over how Mr. Elton takes her behaviour which in turn leads to the various misunderstandings that take place during their carriage drive in Chapter Fifteen of Austen's *Emma*. There are also cases of deliberate misunderstandings, perhaps to comic effect, where no mistake is made but rather the device is used to expose a pretention.

Testing understanding

I have argued that understanding how to exercise certain skills is more significant than the reader gaining propositional knowledge in the case of literary fiction. If this is true then it will have an implication on how understanding is tested. Propositional knowledge can be assessed with multiple choice questions whereas it is hard to see how understanding from

literary fiction, as described above, could be tested in this way. Michael Bonnett in his *Children's Thinking* suggests that a class teacher could test children's understanding of literature through a standard question-and-answer scenario where the teacher, who it is assumed has a good understanding of the literary text, looks out for a fuller response:

Such potential criteria would include degree of vitality, perceptiveness, sensitivity, freshness of expression, aptness, engagement, empathy with subject, atmosphere, integrity, depth of meaning, revealment, self-expressiveness, imaginativeness, effectiveness of imagery and symbolism etc.

(Bonnett 1994: 172)

A further test for the senses of understanding described above involves such familiarity as enables proficient application. Understanding in the senses identified above may be tested by comparing and contrasting two or more literary works or asking the student to exercise some practical criticism on a previously unseen work. With regard to application of one's understanding, I am reminded of a characterful tutor in medicine I knew, who was famed for setting eccentric essay questions for his undergraduates: What are the differences between my neck and the neck of a giraffe? How is the human nervous system like the Athanasian Creed? One assumes that the professor thought the regurgitation of medical facts too even a playing field to test his students' understanding of the subject and was satisfied that his students were competent medical practitioners. As a consequence, he considered the best way to test his students' understanding was to force them to apply their understanding to the new and unfamiliar: in this case to see that the human nervous system can be conceptualised as 'a trinity in unity' (an early line in the Athanasian creed). Encouraging medical students to think around the subject is good practice for their intended careers when they might meet cases far removed from those described in their text books.

Stimulating understanding

Having clarified various senses of understanding, and having located the potential gain from reading literary fiction in the development of certain skills, I want to end by saying something about how the cognitive gain might be stimulated. I shall take as a starting point

this passage from Christopher Bailey's work in the philosophy of education *Beyond the Present and the Particular* (1984):

A teacher seeking to teach for understanding, then, will need to:

- (i) be aware of the state of the present understandings of individual pupils being taught;
- (ii) have logically adequate understandings himself of what is being taught;
- (iii) be a skilful explainer of what is being taught in that (a) he marshals presentations logically and coherently, and (b) relates them well to individuals' present understandings;
- (iv) be aware of areas of understanding where correctness matters and misunderstanding is possible, and know how to assess for correct understanding; and
- (v) be able to generate puzzlement in the minds of the pupils when it is not already there.

(Bailey 1984: 151)

Despite the cases of the teacher and the author being disanalogous in a number of respects, one assumes that the performance of the former is not judged according to aesthetic criteria, the passage raises a number of points pertinent to our gaining understanding from literary fiction. I approve of Bailey's referring to 'understandings' in the plural given what is laid out above. I think it is hopelessly inadequate to concentrate on one type of understanding as exemplary or develop any thesis that seeks to show that understanding is really one kind of knowledge. Bailey's account also draws our attention to points that might be missed such as the need for sensitivity in the author as to what a popular understanding of a given issue is likely to be prior to the reader taking up the literary fictional work. Without this assumption it would be difficult for any author to challenge received opinion. Further, that the author needs to have some understanding of what the theme is that he or she wishes to convey and to possess skill in communication in order to convey such a theme. This skill extends to being able to predict where, for instance, ambiguity may be helpful in stimulating the reader's engagement and where ambiguity may mislead the reader in a way detrimental to their understanding. Bailey's point (v) suggests insightfully that understanding may be conveyed through puzzlement initially rather than through explicit exposition; perhaps in the style of a Socratic interrogation.

So, by adapting Bailey's criteria, we can say of an author seeking to stimulate understanding through literary fiction:

- i) that such an author requires a general idea of what a popular understanding of p is likely to consist in
- ii) has logically adequate understandings of what he or she is trying to convey
- iii) communicates effectively through the artistic presentation of the work
- iv) is aware of what is important to understand, where potential misunderstandings may occur and what would count as a test for understanding
- v) is able to generate puzzlement in the minds of the readers when puzzlement is not already there but when it may help to arrest the attention of the reader.

It is important, in what follows, to consider the artistry of the author in communicating the relevant senses of understanding through a work of *literary* fiction.

3.3 Understanding *literary* fiction

A literary cognitivist needs to state whether the cognitive value of reading literary fiction comes from the fictional status of a text or as a result of the literary features of a text or as a result of both. My contention is that while the fictional status of literary fiction can contribute to cognitive gain, for instance fiction allows an author the freedom to explore ideas, it is the literariness of literary fiction that plays the more significant role in helping a reader to develop a better understanding in the senses identified in section (3.2). The role of literary features has not previously been awarded enough credit and runs contrary to most orthodox positions which, following the tradition of Kendall Walton (1990), focus discussion on literary fiction as fiction.

In the first part of this section I set out what I take to be the standard practices of reading *literary* fiction and in the second part discuss a prominent account of reading *fiction* known as simulationism. In recent years reading fiction has been characterised in terms of running a simulation in one's imagination. I argue that running a life-like simulation of events depicted in a fiction is neither necessary nor sufficient for the cognitive gain outlined above. While 'taking X to be the case in a fiction' is a necessary condition for reading literary fiction, and as a consequence is a necessary condition for gaining understanding

from reading literary fiction, primary imagining is not a sufficient condition for the cognitive gain that I seek to defend. As a result of reading this section, I hope that the reader will see clear water between reading literary fiction as literature and reading literary fiction as fiction and identify the practices typical in the former case with developing a better understanding.

Close analysis and interpretation

There are at least three recognisable stages to reading literary fiction as literature: an initial reading where the reader establishes what the play, poem or prose is about, close analysis of the work in question and the reader forming his or her interpretation of the text on the back of the close analysis. An initial reading of e. e. cummings' 'it may not always be so; and I say' (attached as the first appendix before the bibliography) will inform the reader that this poem is a counterfactual scenario exploring how the narrator would feel and react should his lover find someone else. The reader should note on first reading that the poem is a sonnet divided into an octave and sestet. A first reading will flag up difficult or unusual parts of the work that require further thought. On my first reading of the poem I wondered as to the meaning of the phrase 'uttering overmuch' (line 7) and the significance of the metaphor of a spirit being held at bay (line 8). There is no clear line in the sand between the three stages of reading a literary fictional work and something from one's first reading may guide closer analysis which, in turn, can identify a significant or recurring theme to shape an overall interpretation.

I term the second, distinctive stage of reading a literary fictional text 'close analysis' rather than the more common 'close reading' or 'practical criticism' as, while these descriptions refer to same process, I do not want to identify the process with any one movement or individual. The etymology of 'analysis' suggests loosening, unravelling or an investigation of the parts having disassembled the whole. There are many significant features worthy of comment relating to the poem in appendix (1) but I shall limit myself to only a few comments to give the reader an idea of what might be involved in this second stage.

The choice of the Petrarchan sonnet form is ironic given that many poems written in this form are dedicated to unrequited love; the poem in appendix (1) is about imaginary unrequited love after a relationship has dissolved. Time seems a significant theme in the poem and receives explicit mention in lines 1, 2 and 4 while is implicit in lines 6 and 9.

The first stanza takes the traditional, enclosed ABBAABBA rhyme scheme while the sestet exhibits the more open ended ABCABC scheme which fits its counterfactual subject matter. The repeated motif of 'I say' is declarative and in the opening line of the sestet contributes to the impassioned and heartfelt tone. The words used to describe the female character: dear, strong, sweet, great, helpless and 'of his heart' are eulogising and reverential and refer on two occasions to his lover's words. Each stanza ends with an animal metaphor: an exhausted hunted creature, perhaps a stag, held at bay before his execution and a lone bird, an image of abandonment and of the poet as songster. There is ambiguity in whether 'spirit' in line (8) refers to the narrator or the spirit of love. There is also ambiguity in the word 'Accept' meaning either 'take from' as when one accepts an invitation or an apology and 'coming to terms with' as when one accepts an unfavourable decision. The second part of the poem is rich in biblical allusion: she is of his heart (not his rib), a word is sent '...that i may go unto him' and the phrase 'turn my face' echoes passages in the Gospels such as Luke (9: 53). Understatement is also used with regards to the 'little word' to contrast to the 'great writhing words' of the octave. The poet's play with punctuation, grammar and capitalisation show that 'literary devices' are not limited to the likes of irony and metaphor but extend to more fundamental aspects of a text.

Close analysis covers many aspects of a poem, play or literary prose as Terry Eagleton says in the following passage from *How to Read Literature* (evidence for potential understanding in senses i and iv):

You can analyse the sound-texture of a passage, or fasten on what seem significant ambiguities, or look at the way grammar and syntax are put to work. You can examine the emotional attitudes that a passage seems to take up to what it is presenting, or focus on some revealing paradoxes, discrepancies and contradictions. Tracking down the unspoken implications of what is said can sometimes be important. Judging the tone of a passage, and how this may shift or waver, can be equally productive. It can be helpful to try to define the exact quality of a piece of writing. It may be sombre, off-hand, devious, colloquial, terse, jaded, glib, theatrical, ironic, laconic, artless, abrasive, sensuous, sinewy and so on.

(Eagleton 2013: 43-44)

The cognitive elements (particularly understanding in senses ii and iii) are brought out by Catherine Elgin when she cites the following competences associated with analysing a text (1996: 189): the ability to make connections, the ability to marshal material in an orderly

way, the ability to spot a pattern, the ability to spell out an implication, the ability to identify a possibility, the ability to draw a distinction, sensitivity to nuance and connotation, the ability to recognise a fresh perspective, the ability to recognise a new question or set of questions, the ability to re-categorise subject matter and the ability to apply the information in new and challenging contexts. The close analysis of literary texts involves spotting recurring patterns in the likes of symbolism, rhyme or allusion.

Close analysis is an exercise in attention to detail where attention is paid to what seems strange or out of place in an image, tone or choice of words. This, in part, is a matter of trusting one's instincts. A particular trope or phrase may evoke a certain image or train of thought. The reader then suggests why such and such might be phrased in this way. The process of close analysis is influenced by the reader's life experience outside the text as well as any knowledge the reader might have of the historical context, authorial intentions or of the etymology of certain words. I believe what I have said about close analysis is substantiated by prominent works on practical criticism. What I outline is compatible with descriptions of close reading of literary texts, such as: (Cox & Dyson 1965: 18-22; Wain 1972: xiii-xvi; Phythian 1978: 15-16; Peet & Robinson 1992: 18-20, 82, 103, 183-184; Croft & Cross 2000: 193-95; Pope, R. 2012: 84-86).

Close analysis results in an intuitive and complex mess which requires careful navigation. The result is a text covered with highlighted, underlined or circled words according to which elements of the work are pursued, and arrows leading to marginal annotations. This marginalia alone is not sufficient for a reading of a given work. Recognition that a word or phrase is ironic does not lead us anywhere beyond that immediate recognition. What is required is some organisation of the material yielded by close analysis, perhaps where themes are grouped together and arranged or presented in some coherent form. Recognition that a phrase is ironic may then be linked to an important overarching theme. Working out what the theme is and giving it some coherent form in itself and in the context of an overarching reading is referred to above as 'forming an interpretation' of a work.

There are many details that I have not commented on in the close reading above and I would have to make a similar decision over what to leave out in forming my reading or interpretation of the poem. Perhaps there is a point that I am not clear about which constitutes work in progress or a thought that does not connect to the other material. I also need to decide on the order of the material, whether to follow the sequence of the literary work or arrange the material in themes and what constitutes the main themes. I thought about arranging my reading of this poem in terms of the first words of the stanzas 'it' and

‘if’ or perhaps in terms of the only words with capital letters ‘Accept’ and ‘Then’. Finally, I need to decide on whether to include a personal aesthetic judgement.

The poem ‘it may not always be so; and i say’ may strike some readers as overly melodramatic. The synecdoche of ‘your lips, which i have loved’ (line 2) might seem odd to those who look for love beyond protruding lips. The syntax of the second quatrain of the Octave proves difficult to follow to the point of being ungrammatical and it may remain unclear to the reader what ‘uttering overmuch’ really means as well as an uncomfortable metaphor which describes words as standing. Further, the poem might be criticised for the introduction of an ad hoc bird at the end of the sestet and for ending on a slightly clichéd image for loneliness. Alternatively, the poem may be praised for its arresting opening quatrain, for the naturalness of phrases such as ‘it may not always be so’ and for its confident expression of emotion. These aesthetic judgements do not interfere with my developing a better understanding in senses (i-iv) above. This is not to say that my close analysis cannot, at times, affect my aesthetic judgement (see section 2.3 and 4.7).

On the back of the discussion above, we can make the following statements concerning how our understanding of literary fiction is achieved:

- (i) The reader understands a literary fictional work through the practice of close analysis.
- (ii) In making sense of the close analysis the reader forms an interpretation of the work of literary fiction.

There is a gap, however, between understanding a literary fictional text and the interpersonal understanding claimed by the literary cognitivist. The gap exists between understanding a literary fictional work and our understanding the world. This necessitates an additional statement which will act as a placeholder until Chapter Five:

- (iii) The close analysis and interpretation of a literary fictional work assists the reader’s interpersonal understanding of the world beyond the text.

I want next to emphasise the role literary devices play, over fiction, in the reader establishing (i) and (ii).

In recent years the notion of imagination as simulation has taken root, largely in the absence of a better alternative. In general terms a simulation is a dynamic and realistic presentation of reality contrived under controlled conditions for various purposes including cognitive gain. The claim that simulation increases interpersonal understanding can be traced back to the debate between theory theorists and non-theory theorists (the latter are sometimes referred to as simulationists) in the philosophy of mind. Simulation in this context is classed as follows:

In the case of mental simulation the simulator feeds pretend beliefs and desires into her mental apparatus, and lets the same psychological processes operate as would operate upon real beliefs and desires.

(Davies and Stone *Folk Psychology* 1995: 19)

Note that Jane Heal is often conservative in her description of what simulation involves: ‘...‘simulate’ in this context cannot mean ‘recreate’ or ‘build a model of’; it can here mean nothing richer than ‘imagine’ or ‘think about’. In other words, all it can mean is ‘represent’ (Heal 1995: 47). A particular example may help to illustrate the simulationist claim to better interpersonal understanding.

There is cognitive advantage to running a simulation of events which the following example tries to capture. The captain of a local rugby club had the unpopular task of telling a dedicated member of the team that he was dropped owing to his lack of fitness. On the drive to his team mate’s house the captain ran through some possible ways of how to break the news and ran some corresponding imagined scenarios (simulations) on how the news might be taken. The captain saw the player who was about to be dropped as someone who operated under the normative constraints of rationality i.e. someone who would understand that he is dropped from the team owing to his lack of fitness and why this was important in light of the forthcoming match. The player’s family life, personality and sensitivities were also fed into the simulation. For instance, some scripts were rejected as the captain thought they would sound too clichéd, pre-rehearsed, direct or open to misinterpretation.

There are at least two significant things to note about this example. First, the imagined scenario does not have to be particularly life-like. The individual breaking the unpleasant news only needs to construct the relevant details; imagining the décor can be omitted.

Also, it is significant to note while there might be sporadic insights noted at the time of the conversation, the cognitive gain through simulation takes place in anticipation of the event where possibilities are entertained after the event. Having entertained more than one scenario, the captain understands that a particular simulated scenario is closest to the actual scenario. On the drive back from breaking the news, the captain can reflect on how the episode played out. What point was taken as being particularly persuasive? What did the player mean when he said such and such and how does this detail fit with any pre-conceptions? Some detail might have been surprisingly different to the simulation which will in turn inform the captain's conception of his (former) team mate. My contention is that while running a simulation in this manner may teach us something, it has only a loose connection to the cognitive gain defended in this project. Simulation offers an account of how to read fiction which many philosophers of fiction deem attractive (Currie 1995a and 1995b, 2002; Feagin 1996; Oatley and Gholamain 1997). I need to state explicitly why I do not find simulationism convincing and why the account does not provide an answer to my research question.

Gregory Currie argues for a version of simulationism in his paper 'The Moral Psychology of Fiction' (1995a) where Currie awards some role for fiction in our moral learning: '...a really vivid fiction might get you to revise your values' (1995a: 254). Currie has since changed position on the cognitive role of fiction in an ethical context but I am only interested in the account he gives of fiction as simulation which has not changed (to my knowledge) and which is pertinent to the present discussion. Central to Currie's simulationism is the distinction between primary and secondary imagining. Primary imagining covers what the reader takes to be true in a given story: 'Part of engaging with a fictional work consists of imagining those things which it makes fictional...imaginings about the story's characters and situations' (1995a: 255, 256). For example, I imagine that Levin in *Anna Karenina* spends time working in the fields alongside his tenants owing to a strong work ethic. Secondary imagining, in contrast, involves putting oneself in a fictional character's position and in so doing '...I come to simulate the thoughts, feelings and attitudes I would have were I in that situation' (1995a: 256). A reader, according to Currie, will imagine having the beliefs, desires and values as Levin and imagine enjoying the feeling of satisfaction at completing a hard day's work with the accompanying camaraderie. Currie maintains that: 'The moral power of fiction lies not so much in what makes fictional and in what we are therefore to imagine concerning its characters, but in what it encourages us to imagine about ourselves in order that we should discover what is fictional of those characters' (1995a: 258). I take this to mean that propositional imagining

of the primary kind e.g. that Levin believes that ‘work is good’ is not sufficient for the reader’s understanding of the moral view. The reader needs to inhabit the fiction imaginatively to the extent that he or she is ‘right there with the action’ in order to be usefully informed.

‘The Moral Psychology of Fiction’ contains a strong statement about the reader taking on the beliefs and desires of those fictional characters that he or she reads about:

...I *take on*, temporarily, the beliefs and desires I assume someone in that situation would start off by having; they become, temporarily, *my own* beliefs and desires. Being, thus temporarily, my own, they work their own effects on my mental economy, having the sorts of impacts on how I feel and what I decide to do that my ordinary, real beliefs and desires have.

(Currie 1995a: 252 italics in original)

In his anthologised paper ‘Imagination and Simulation’ (1995b) Currie goes as far as to include the replication of bodily sensations in the simulation (1995b: 157) as well as the unconscious: ‘If, as I have argued, fictions function to drive imagination, they do so in ways of which the subject is sometimes unaware, and over which the subject rarely exerts conscious control’ (Currie 1995b: 162). In his pronouncement on simulation in Chapter Three of *Recreative Minds*, Currie and co-author Ian Ravenscroft say: ‘...mentalizing depends to a significant extent on, and can be at least partly explained in terms of, our capacity to project ourselves in imagination into the situation of others, and to generate within ourselves states of imagining that have as their counterparts the beliefs and desires of someone (hereafter ‘the target’) whose behaviour we want to predict or understand’ (Currie and Ravenscroft 2002: 51). We do not need to go into all the technicalities of Currie’s position to realise that the card is overplayed and further that simulation of this kind is not required for the senses of understanding I seek to defend; although there seems to be some role for the reader learning what an experience is like.

I am not convinced that secondary imagining plays such a significant role in the phenomenology of reading literary fiction and invite the reader to read James Joyce’s short story ‘Counterparts’ or at least the following two extracts then answer the question which follows:

The man stared fixedly at the polished skull which directed the affairs of Crosbie and Alleyne, gauging its fragility. A spasm of rage gripped his throat for a few moments and then passed, leaving after it a sharp sensation of thirst. The man

recognised the sensation and felt that he must have a good night's drinking. The middle of the month was passed and, if he could get the copy done in time, Mr. Alleyne might give him an order on the cashier...

(Joyce 2000: 83)

He cursed everything. He had done for himself in the office, pawned his watch, spent all his money; and he had not even got drunk. He began to feel thirsty again and he longed to be back again in the hot, reeking public-house. He had lost his reputation as a strong man, having been defeated twice by a mere boy. His heart swelled with fury and, when he thought of the woman in the big hat who had brushed against him and said *Pardon!* his fury nearly choked him.

(Joyce 2000: 93)

How many of Farrington's mental states do you 'take on' to use Currie's term? When I read this story I take certain things to be true in the fiction (my primary imaginings) and I may empathise with some of Farrington's frustrations but I do not entertain the perceptions he has of his boss seated in front of him or even a perception of the whole scene as it is described. I do not experience the physiological manifestations of Farrington's fury, nor his regret, humiliation or frustrated desire (I do not imagine feeling anything in *my* throat when I read the first extract and may even experience a sense of the ridiculous about the situation described). I register all of these details as they are presented to me, the reader, by the literary fictional text but that is all; indeed that is enough.²⁹

Admittedly, there are cases where secondary imagining could prove more prevalent. Authors who read their own fiction may imagine more vividly, children may conjure up an imaginary world in greater detail than adults and there will be occasional 'Walter Mitty' moments when a reader becomes so absorbed in the text that he or she ends up imagining the kinds of experience that the character is supposed to be experiencing. As a result, we should talk about 'degrees of imagining' that cover a spectrum of engagement, identification with, absorption in, together with full blown simulation. Degrees of simulation depend on the text and on the readership but we cannot state that secondary imagining is the normal response to a text.

I agree with Matthew Kieran in his paper 'In Search of Narrative' (2003) that the kind of life-like simulation described by the term 'secondary imagining' is neither a necessary nor

²⁹ See Carroll (2010: 329-352) and Kieran (2003: 69-87).

sufficient condition on my understanding of characters, episodes or themes presented in a literary work (2003: 72). Kieran (2003) adds two more arguments to the contention that simulation *need* not feature as part of my gaining a better understanding of others from literary fiction. First, in certain cases imaginative simulation *should* not feature in my reading and secondly that imaginative simulation *cannot* feature in my reading. Kieran argues that it can be disadvantageous to run a simulation; if the reader imagines herself in the position of a mistaken character then she will be led down the garden path and end up as mistaken as the character (2003: 73). The reader needs to remain conscious of how the embedded narrator, Nellie Dean, is reporting events and conversations in *Wuthering Heights* as on many occasions the reporting is manipulated by this character. Alertness to this character's manipulation seems unconnected to any secondary imagining as outlined above. Secondly, the reader may be incapable of simulating unfamiliar emotions but only 'grasp the contours of the state from the description and the way in which it is thus relatable to those emotions we are familiar with and have been subject to' (2003: 75). One might find it impossible to simulate Humbert Humbert's sexual attraction towards an under aged girl as described in *Lolita* or simulate how Patrick Bateman sees the world in *American Psycho*. While primary imagination counts as a necessary condition on reading literary fiction, and consequently on gaining cognitively from reading literary fiction, the reader's entertaining the thought that p is true in a fiction is not a sufficient condition on the kinds of understanding identified in section (3.2).

I conclude, along with Kieran, that simulation in either the primary or the secondary sense is not a sufficient condition on the reader's understanding: 'For deep understanding can be achieved without simulation, necessarily depends upon the possession of a rich narrative understanding and makes use of many narrative features with respect to which simulation is otiose or inapplicable. Simulation cannot be the central mechanism that affords narrative understanding' (2003: 87). I take the 'deep understanding' referred to as compatible with the five senses of understanding identified above. Kieran is correct in both his reservations about simulationism and in awarding a primary role to what he terms 'narrative features' which as a category I assume to have common ground with what I call 'literary features'. Kieran cites 'figurative, symbolic and metaphoric allusions' as well as play with perspective as features of literary fiction that afford the reader 'a much deeper grasp of character' (2003: 78). In fairness, Currie does attribute a role for narrative or literary features in stimulating secondary imagining (Currie 1995: 254). In sum, my contention is that secondary imagining is not an integral part of the phenomenology of reading literary fiction and counts as neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on the cognitive gain

from literary fiction though some form of simulation may play a peripheral role in understanding a text. We should then ask what the relation is between literary features and cognitive gain, which is taken up in Chapter Four.

3.4 The charge of elitism

The thesis that a reader can gain a better understanding from reading literature through the method outlined above (3.3) is subject to the charge of elitism. It should be noted from the outset that literary fiction, in general, is not written for an elite audience like a technical paper in analytic philosophy or a work on post-structuralism in literary theory where such texts are incomprehensible to anyone without specialist knowledge. One does not need specialist knowledge to read literary fiction although literary fiction is often described using specialist vocabulary. One might say, for instance, that Blake has introduced a trochaic foot into lines of tetrameter. The cognitive value of literary fiction, defended here, does not lie in knowledge of the terminology involved; such terminology provides convenient shorthand to say a number of things precisely in a minimum number of words. The relevant cognitive value from literary fiction depends on sensitivity to the text, a range of skills pertaining to attention to detail and organisation of the material gathered from close analysis. The fact that these skills of analysis are exercised by a small number of specialists is not sufficient for the charge of elitism, after all we do not condemn elite athletes, crack commandos or expert carpet fitters for their expertise.

The precise charge of elitism is twofold:

- a) My account sounds elitist if I condemn popular fiction like J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter' series for not yielding to close analysis and literary interpretation.
- b) My account sounds elitist if I argue that there is a way to read literary fiction that seems open to a few and then condemn readers that fall short of this high standard.

I can live with (a) as it is a fact that some fiction does not yield to close analysis and literary interpretation and as such these texts fall short of what counts as grounds for the kind of cognitive gain that I seek to defend. This does not mean that such texts should be looked down upon as they might provide rich benefits in other ways such as an escape from the routine and perfunctory. The second charge requires a little more by way of

response and I want to say that a sensitive, close reading exists in degrees rather than as a disjunction between reading in a close way and not reading in a close way and that, further, close reading is genuinely democratic.

There is a parallel discussion in Peter Kivy's *Music Alone* (1990) which I shall draw on; Kivy quotes the following passage from E.M. Forster's *Howards End* as an epigraph to his book and refers to the character's respective positions throughout the work:

It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man. All sorts and conditions are satisfied by it. Whether you are like Mrs Munt, and tap surreptitiously when the tunes come – of course, not so as to disturb the others –; or like Helen, who can see heroes and shipwrecks in the music's flood; or like Margaret, who can only see the music; or like Tibby, who is profoundly versed in counterpoint, and holds the full score open on his knee.

(Kivy 1990: vi)

One might envisage another trip, not to the Queen's Hall to hear Beethoven, but to The Globe Theatre to see *Macbeth* where Forster's characters adopt similar stances. Mrs Munt may be sensitive to the mood of the opening scene with the three weird sisters or the sword fights in the final act. To Helen, the characters in the drama would seem life-like and feed her imagination while for Margaret the play would be interesting as a piece of theatre. Finally Tibby, who seems of all the positions represented the most obvious target for any charge of elitism, would watch the performance with a copy of the play open to note allusion, irony and metaphor. Further, there will be degrees of appreciation as to how such literary devices are used in a literary work. Differences between a theatrical and musical performance do not damage the point I make about degrees of appreciation in order to avoid the false dichotomy, possible in some charges of elitism, between reading as a professor and reading as a punter; most of us are somewhere in between.

Kivy argues in the case of musical performance, and I acknowledge in the literary case, that it is too simple a dichotomy to say that Mrs Munt does not understand the performance while Tibby does understand the performance. Kivy reasons that '... there is a continuum of more and more complex cognition ...' where Mrs Munt, Tibby and the composer or author are listening to the same work' (1990: 69). It should be pointed out that the sense of cognition here is used in its most general sense of there being some thinking going on, stimulated by what is heard or seen. Along these lines Kivy is correct that there is only a

quantitative difference between Tibby's cognitive engagement with the work and that of Mrs Munt. One may continue that casual theatre goers like Mrs Munt should not be underestimated and that further reflection on themes of the play can be gained from a basic engagement with the fiction; for instance they may consider that actions sometimes have consequences that cannot be escaped. On hearing a Mrs Munt say that a play has made her think, any further enquiry as to what the play made her think about may be met with silence, but in the spirit of Kivy's discussion this does not mean that reflection has not taken place but only that the individual finds the appropriate articulation difficult:

What the skeptic fails to distinguish here is the difference between thinking, *consciously*, about the music and being *conscious* of one's thinking, that is to say, being aware and perceiving that (and what) one is thinking. In the former case it is the music that is the object of one's thoughts; in the latter case it is one's thinking that is the object.

(Kivy 1990: 81)

In upshot, it would be unfair to say that Mrs Munt at the theatre is not engaging intellectually with the play as she is both registering and reflecting on what is before her. However, it is fair to say that while such engagement is a necessary condition on cognitive value from literature and indeed a natural starting point, such engagement does not involve the kind of cognitive gain from the literary arts that I defend here but rather the first steps towards such skilled reading. I conceive of the gain arising from a reader's engagement with a work where the reading is detailed, keenly noticed, coherently arranged and commented on in an articulate way. These activities contribute to what counts as a good interpretation of literary fiction. The account I offer is an intellectualised account in so far as it refers to how the reader uses his or her intellect - but this need not be elitist.

A further corollary and one that meets the previous accusation of elitism is that Tibby's response to *Macbeth* does not necessarily meet this ideal model solely by virtue of the fact that he is making an academic study of the text. In fact the academic literati may be pre-occupied with specialist concerns, the influence of the *Demonology* of James I (1599) on *Macbeth* (1606) for instance, to the extent that some of the cognitive value may be missed. So a scholarly work of literary criticism may or may not carry the kind of cognitive gain in terms of understanding upon which I rest my case. There will be much literary criticism that is of peripheral importance in gaining a better interpersonal understanding from literary fiction: the paraphrase of plots, detail of authorial intention (from personal

correspondence), detail of the research that authors undertook, comment on how successful the author is in achieving his or her aesthetic goals or comment on issues in the philosophy of literature. Other details will be more relevant to the cognitive value of literary criticism: comparative work on various drafts (for instance how George Eliot's conception of sympathy develops over her work) or differences between how a theme is portrayed in different works by the same author (for instance the similarities and differences between depictions of sympathy in *Silas Marner* and *Felix Holt*). Discussion on problematic aspects of a work, how believable an episode is, may be relevant to the reader's understanding as well as Marxist, Feminist, historicist and psychoanalytic readings. Nevertheless, a razor needs to be applied to literary criticism by the literary cognitivists as not all criticism is relevant to the cognitive value of literary fiction.

This section ends with some comments on 'the democracy of difficulty' by the English poet Geoffrey Hill who addresses the challenge of elitism directly.³⁰ Hill starts with interpersonal understanding:

We are difficult. Human beings are difficult. We're difficult to ourselves, we're difficult to each other. And we are mysteries to ourselves, we are mysteries to each other. One encounters in any ordinary day far more difficulty than one confronts in the most "intellectual" piece of work. Why is it believed that poetry, prose, painting, music should be less than we are?

(Hill 1999, in interview with Carl Phillips)

Given an artist may wish to comment on how we are and given that we are difficult, an artist may wish to comment on how we are difficult where portraying a difficult subject matter licenses a difficult artistic form of depiction. To object that art is too difficult or not made simple is a kind of tyranny on art in general and for our purposes on the literary arts in particular. Hill continues:

Why does music, why does poetry have to address us in simplified terms, when if such simplification were applied to a description of our inner selves we would find it demeaning? I think art has a right – not an obligation – to be difficult if it wishes. And, since people generally go on from this to talk about elitism versus democracy, I would add that genuinely difficult art is truly democratic.

(Hill 1999, in interview with Carl Phillips)

³⁰ The two sources I have in mind are two extracts from Hill's *Collected Critical Writings* (2008: 289; 530-531) and an interview in February 1999 in *The Paris Review*.

Hill points out the need for diligence in working a text in relation to a comment made by Tyndale of some texts that ‘semeth at first choppe harde to be vunderstonde’ (2008: 289). Such texts require a little more effort to understand but if exercising effort is the target of criticism then to make the charge of elitism is just to support over simplification and idleness when reading.

3.5 The charge of subjectivity

So far, in this chapter, I have argued for the following four theses: first, that literary fiction is useful in helping the reader understand how people think, act and interact along the same lines as common sense psychology. Secondly, that the proposed cognitive gain that we receive from literary fiction is best expressed in terms of five senses of understanding. Thirdly, that: ‘close analysis’ and ‘interpretation’ play fundamental roles in my gaining cognitively from literary fiction. Fourthly, that the significant stimulation for these five senses of understanding is achieved by the reader’s interaction with the standard *literary* features of literary fiction rather than the work’s status as fiction.

One charge that may be levelled against literary cognitivism is that such a position overplays the epistemic credentials of engaging with literary fiction given that most discussion surrounding these texts is made up of a mere exchange of personally held opinions which is not the stuff of genuine cognitive gain. This challenge arises from the fact that a reader’s analysis and interpretation of a literary fictional work involves at least two kinds of personal engagement. In the first instance, readers draw on their own experience as part of a close reading. A Christian reader of *King Lear* is well placed to recognise that Cordelia’s reply: ‘O dear father, It is thy business that I go about’ (IV.4.23) alludes to Jesus’s words on being found in the temple by Mary and Joseph: ‘Did you not know that I must be about my father’s business’ Luke (2: 49). As Putnam says:

There can never be a final commentary, one that is perfect from the standpoint of every cultural position, every set of interests and assumptions.

(Putnam 1983 a:80)

In addition, it is widespread practice to arrange the material gathered from a close analysis in what the reader considers a coherent form. There is no single correct format of presentation and literary interpretation relies on the personal preference of the reader. Arrangement of the material gathered from a close reading according to personal preference is not unique to literary interpretation and extends to making a business pitch, presenting a case in a law court and writing a lecture.

The presence of these personal elements fuels the charge that reading literary fiction is very much a *subjective* affair. The subjectivism in question is the kind that threatens objectivity and holds that there is nothing independent of opinion: ‘A wholly subjective opinion is one that is answerable to nothing more than how things seem to the subject’ (Smith 2007: 46). This subjectivism is compatible with relativism: ‘Relativism would lead us to say that each was right to deny the other’s opinion: that truth was relative to a point of view...’ (Smith 2007: 65). I should point out that the challenge in question applies to those texts that are rich enough to generate divergent readings; there is not much more to say about Herrick’s line ‘Gather ye rose buds while ye may’ other than a paraphrase of the thought. In contrast, on reading *The Tempest* one reader may conclude that Prospero is a pragmatic Machiavel, an arch manipulator of images and of his daughter while a second reader may conclude that Prospero is an insightful and benign Magus and that the first reading is wrong. Unlike differences of opinion in other areas where resolution depends on further investigation, in the literary case, there seems nothing more to add other than that these different personal readings of a text conflict.

The challenge to my literary cognitivist thesis may be summarised as follows:

1. There are personal elements to close reading and to a reader forming an interpretation of a given literary fiction.
2. From (1) there is more than one admissible reading of a literary fiction.
3. If we allow there to be more than one admissible reading of a literary fiction, then the claim that a reader of literary fiction achieves genuine cognitive gain is undermined.
4. The claim that a reader of literary fiction achieves genuine cognitive gain is undermined.

My counter is that statement (1) overstates what is involved in a close reading and the forming of an interpretation of a literary text and that statement (3) amounts to a false entailment. The main flaw in the challenge is that it is entirely outcome-focussed while my version of literary cognitivism depends on certain skills of understanding that are gained while the reader offers a close reading and develops a fitting interpretation of the text. It is unclear why subjective elements or variation in the end result can compromise this kind of cognitive gain. The fact that readers can sometimes get things wrong, for instance misreading a poem by Wyatt as a bawdy Restoration ballad rather than as Tudor gallantry, has no bearing on the challenge laid out above and need not detain us further.

The pluralism-monism debate about literary criticism does not help either. Critical monism, the view that there is a central, correct reading of a literary work, ignores the variety of valid interpretation (e.g. Novitz 2002: 103-104). Recourse to critical pluralism, the view that there are multiply admissible interpretations of literary fictional works (e.g. Margolis 2002), frames the issue but does not help counter these charges of subjectivism and relativism as each multiply admissible reading may be based on how the text ‘seems to the subject’. Robert Stecker (1994) argues for a compatibilist position between pluralism and monism: that it is possible to offer a single comprehensive reading of core details of a literary text while interpreting other details, which are not truth functional, in a more individual way (Stecker 1994: 195). For instance, we agree that Kent in *King Lear* adopts a disguise to become Caius, and agree that failure to notice this is to make a mistake. However, we may offer differing readings of what Kent means, for instance whether he is being sincere or not, when he says he sees ‘authority’ in Lear’s face (*King Lear* I. 4. 30). This form of compatibilism, like pluralism, only frames the problem. Let us look more carefully at the phenomenon of disagreement over literary fiction.

The Leavis Bateson debate

My contention is that disagreement between readers of literary fiction involves genuine debate rather than a mere exchange of opinions characteristic of the view that reading literature is ‘merely subjective’. Take as an example the disagreement between Leavis and Bateson from *Scrutiny* (1953) comparing the following lines from Marvell’s ‘A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body’:

A Soul hung up, as 'twere, in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins,
Tortur'd, besides each other part,
In a vain Head, and double Heart.

and Pope's *Dunciad* IV, 501-4:

First slave to Words, then vassal to a Name,
Then dupe to Party; child and man the same;
Bounded by Nature, narrow'd still by Art,
A trifling head, and a contracted heart.

Leavis objects to Bateson's readings of the poems on a number of grounds; here are some examples. Bateson contrasts, incorrectly in Leavis's view, the 'grey abstractions' of Pope's line 'A trifling head, and contracted heart' with Marvell's vivid picture language in his line 'In a vain Head, and double Heart' (Leavis 1968: 283-284). For Leavis, Bateson has just asserted this contrast without providing evidence from the verse and is distracted by a source external to the poem.³¹ Leavis accuses Bateson of applying too simple a schema to Marvell's poem, that the body is a torture chamber of the soul, whereas the poem explores the relation between body and soul in a more sophisticated, original and powerful way (1968: 285-288). Further, Leavis accuses Bateson of taking the words 'slave', 'vassal' and 'dupe' to be 'virtually interchangeable' while Leavis points out that each word carries a distinctive meaning, for example the renting of land as a vassal expresses a different relation to that of being deceived as a dupe (1968: 289-290).

In the course of their disagreement, Leavis and Bateson suggest some guiding principles or criteria for admissible readings of a literary work. I record some representative suggestions in the order that each suggestion appears in the original exchange between these critics and extract five general principles as grounds for not accepting an 'anything goes' relativism based on an exchange of opinion. The reader is required to read a text carefully and 'duly ponder' what they read in accordance with training in 'practical criticism'; this process 'establishes a poem in analysis' (Leavis: 1968: 309). While analysis is emphasised, and Bateson is taken to task by Leavis for his being distracted by social context, the benefits of some specialist knowledge of external factors is given credence by both parties: 'Such

³¹ Emblem VIII in the Fifth Book of Quarles's *Emblemes* which depicts a skeleton lolling in a sitting position (the body) with a kneeling figure inside (the soul).

intelligent reading, directed upon the poetry of the seventeenth century, cannot fail to be aware of period peculiarities of idiom, linguistic usage, convention and so on, and of the need, here, there and elsewhere, for special knowledge' (1968: 281). A close reading must be based on evidence found in the literary work rather than mere assertion (1968: 284). The reader is not expected to work in isolation but as part of a collaborative and constructively critical community (1968: 288). Nevertheless, it is expected of the close reader that he or she provides his or her own analysis, interpretation and relevant experience rather than hide behind the conventions of a previous generation of readers (1968: 291). Articulation of the reader's analysis should be 'delicate and precise' (1968: 291).

Criteria for admissibility

I cite the Leavis-Bateson debate as one piece of evidence to show the kind of close reading and interpretation offered by readers and often overlooked in the philosophical debate. What I outline above is sufficient to demonstrate that reading literary fiction is more than an exchange of personal opinions and involves justification and the presentation of a coherent case. Let us summarise the guiding principles of this way of reading, taken from the Leavis-Bateson debate, as follows:

- i. **Textual evidence:** evidence must be supplied from the literary work for a given reading. The mere assertion of a reader's opinion is deemed malpractice.
- ii. **Specialist Knowledge** – where appropriate the reader may cite specialist knowledge of, for instance, social context, biography or etymology. Knowledge that a skeleton is a symbol for the body is not a matter of opinion.
- iii. **Coherence** – the arrangement of material produced from the process of close reading of the text is arranged into coherent and carefully articulated themes. That certain points fit together in a particular order is not just a matter of personal opinion.
- iv. **Honesty** – where coherence is not possible the reader should draw attention to the fact and comment on any areas of interest as a result of such gaps or

inconsistencies; that certain points do not fit neatly together is not just a matter of personal opinion.

- v. **Autonomy** – the reader should exercise his or her skills of analysis and judgement as to what features of the text are significant. It is significant that authors of literary fiction often refuse to play ball when asked what a particular line or trope in a poem, play or work of literary prose ‘really means’; this is the duty of the reader.

While criteria (i) and (ii) are applicable to the close reading of a literary fictional work, criteria (iii) and (iv) are applicable to the reader forming an interpretive hypothesis of the material gathered from a close reading. Criterion (v) applies to both close reading and hypothesis formation. Each criterion points to something we value in a good reading of literary fiction but no criterion is based on the reader’s opinion as some justification is provided in each case. The Leavis-Bateson debate shows a tension between close textual analysis and the reader’s comment on social context (Leavis 1968: 293). For the sake of argument I agree with Leavis that while there is some place for social commentary the act of literary analysis should take priority and I defend this further through Chapter Four. I end this section with two potential problem cases that suggest a further criterion of admissibility for literary interpretation.

First, what are we to make of wild and outlandish readings? One example may be found in Richard Rand’s paper ‘Ozone: an essay on Keats’ (1987) where the thesis runs that ozone is pertinent to the poetry of Keats. This form of oxygen was discovered in 1840, nineteen years after the poet’s death, but the anachronism is irrelevant for Rand. The justification given is that Keats was inspired by the letter ‘o’:

... at a certain stage, beginning with “Endymion” and ending with “The Fall of Hyperion” – a stage which I am tempted to call the “ozone” of his career ... Keats invested a truly remarkable degree of energy in “o” as a grapheme, in “o” as a phoneme, and in the virtual zone between and around the two terms. “O”, in an infinity of manifestations, became the chief focus of his concern.

(Rand 1987: 297)

Such an interpretation helps Rand interpret the line in Endymion ‘once, above the edges of our nest,/ An arch face peep’d/ an Oread as I guess’ as follows:

Let us grant that an *Oread* is a kind of nymph. You can also read it, however – and we do so here and now – as the words “O read”. “O read”, means the peeping Oread; and, when you do so, “read O”. (1987: 299)

In addition, the line from Keats’s ‘Two or Three Posies’: ‘Two or three dove’s eggs/ To hatch into sonnets’ is deemed significant evidence of Keats’s preoccupation with the letter ‘o’ as ‘that branch of zoology which treats of eggs is denominated “oology”; and the formation and maturation of an egg is called “oogenesis” (1987: 302). Rand’s reading is text based, coherent and autonomous but eccentric, anachronistic and underdeveloped. The third detracting feature is important here. Rand’s paper makes a suggestion that may be fecund but the critic has not followed the suggestion through with a fully formed interpretation of Keats’s verse. If such a reading had been executed and if the reading had offered insight then we should take note in spite of the reading being eccentric and anachronistic.

The second potentially problematic case is an example of a reading that is wrong in an interesting way. The following example is reported in the preface to the Cambridge edition of *The Merchant of Venice*:

The Kenyan writer Karen Blixen once told the story of *The Merchant of Venice* to her Somali butler, Farah Aden, who was deeply disappointed by Shylock’s defeat. He was sure the Jew could have succeeded, if only he had used a red-hot knife. As an African listener, he had expected a tale about a clever trickster in the Brer Rabbit tradition; Shylock let him down. We can be as far off-course as Farah in our reading of the play if we do not pay some heed to the attitudes of its first audience: their range of expectations about comedy as a genre, and the assumptions they brought to a play set in Venice, to its portrayal of the law, of Jews, and of usury, and to its handling of the theme of love and friendship.

(Mahood 1987: 8)

In this example the reader falls foul of the third criterion as they lack specific knowledge that has bearing on our reading of the text and mistake the genre but succeed, unwittingly, in offering a fecund way to explore the text. Why didn’t Shylock argue his case more creatively at the end of the play but submit to conversion and humiliation? A coherent answer to this prompt may count as an illuminating interpretation of *The Merchant of*

Venice. We are presented with a case of an illuminating misreading but I should point out that it is more illuminating when we know that the reading is a misreading and when we nevertheless run the thought experiment and consider what the answer might be to Aden's question 'Why wasn't Shylock more creative in his defence?' This question can be posed and an answer suggested without misreading the play yet credit should be given to the reader who posed the question even on the back of his misreading.

I account for these problem cases, of outlandish and mistaken readings, by suggesting that it is our use of some of the material offered that may in certain circumstances be of cognitive benefit. This detour results in a further criterion which I suggest should run as follows:

- vi. **Fecundity**- the close analysis and interpretation of a literary fictional text is to be judged according to the fecundity of such a reading. A fecund reading leads us to new and interesting possibilities.

My intention in this section is only to show that the business of close reading and interpretation is not merely a matter of opinion and so resist the charge of subjectivism leading to outright relativism.

I want to preserve a healthy resistance to any old codology in literary interpretation but not at the cost of stifling insight. I do not want to punitively police literary interpretation, but allow for different kinds of interpretive project: the anachronistic, creative, psychoanalytic as such readings can re-oxygenate a text. In what has been argued above: I admit to more than one admissible reading of a literary fictional text and believe that this does not damage the cognitive standing of literary interpretation. I am a pluralist but not an 'anything goes' pluralist and have offered six criteria to judge what should or should not count; in offering these criteria I believe the charge of subjectivism is abated.

Chapter Four: The Cognitive Gain from Reading Literary Fiction as Literature.

I argue, in Chapter One, that literary fiction is a subgenre of both literature and fiction as literary fiction possesses the standard features of both literature and fiction and lacks the contra-standard features of both super-genres. One standard feature of literary fiction as literature is the presence of what are known generally as ‘literary devices’. My contention is that literary devices play a crucial and neglected role in a reader gaining cognitive advantage from literary art. What do I mean by ‘literary device’? Literary devices do not form a quasi-natural kind like ‘culinary fruit’ or ‘extreme sport’ so I shall adopt an anti-essentialist approach to categorising literary devices consistent with the approach taken throughout this project. In fact, the term ‘literary device’ can be substituted for ‘game’ in Wittgenstein’s famous passage from *Philosophical Investigations* I.66:

Consider for example the features we call ‘literary devices’. What is common to them all? – Don’t say “There *must* be something common, or they would not be called ‘literary devices’”- but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. -For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.

Literary devices form an extended family where there is variation in resemblance between the likes of: onomatopoeia, symbolism and omniscient narration. So, we may conclude along with Wittgenstein (*PI* I.66):

And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

As a result, I am left with a considerable number and variety of potential candidates for literary devices deserving of comment as well as a vague overlap between what counts as narrative, aesthetic, rhetorical and literary devices.

Narrative style may include irony or allusion, which are also literary devices. Aesthetic devices generate aesthetic effect but may include rhyme, rhythm and metre which are also referred to as ‘literary devices’. Rhetorical devices are used to make a piece of writing

sound more convincing and range from the Ciceronian rhetorical strategy of citing things in groups of three to literary devices like alliteration. I shall keep only the prime candidates for literary devices in focus so as this chapter does not become unwieldy. Specific literary devices that deserve a more thorough treatment than I have space to offer here include: bathos, epiphanies, flashbacks, types of paradox such as oxymoron, pathetic fallacy, the role of the chorus, poetic justice, double plots (where the subplot comments on the main plot), symbolism, comic intensification, personification, soliloquy and interior monologue. I have also omitted a discussion of the more general aspects of a work: voice, tone, style, characterisation and imagery. The selection of literary devices is derived from the philosophical literature as well as from my experience as a reader:

- irony and allusion (Nussbaum 1992: 3; Currie 2010: 164-166),
- particularity and precision: particular detail (Putnam 1978: 87; Nussbaum 1992: 38 154); precise use of language (Beardsmore 1973: 36-37; Robinson 2005: 161; Lodge 2002: 12, 18; Gibson 2007: 75-80),
- metaphor and related tropes (Nussbaum 1992: 157; Lodge 2002: 13; Gibson 2007: 75),
- play with perspective (Putnam 1978: 87; Nussbaum 1992: 32; Robinson 2005: 159; Lodge 2002: 37; Gibson 2007: 20),
- ambiguity (John 1998: 336-337),
- repetition through rhythm, rhyme and alliteration (Lodge 2002: 37).

In each section, I shall discuss the relevant candidate in terms of the senses of understanding as presented in section (3.2). The general argument in section (4.1-6) runs as follows: reading literary fiction involves engagement with common literary devices such as irony and metaphor; the same level of engagement is not a prominent feature of reading non-literary fiction. The reader's engagement with literary devices is a way that the reader can practice exercising understanding in senses (i-v) above so literary fiction is a source of cognitive gain. 'Involves engagement' is deliberately vague here as the exact nature of the engagement depends on what simile, rhyme or instance of irony is in play. The project seeks to move the cognitivist debate away from *what* the reader gains from reading literary fiction to the process of *how* the reader gains any cognitive benefit from reading literary fiction.

My claim to cognitive gain from reading literary fiction is not an exclusive one as we can gain understanding, in the senses discussed above, elsewhere. Nevertheless, I maintain that reading literary fiction is an especially impressive way of practising the relevant skills given the broad range and combinations of cognitive capacities required when we read literary fiction and the way in which the material generated from a close reading feeds into the reader's interpretation of a literary work.

4.1 Irony

'Being ironic' belongs with the multiplicity of language games identified by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* (I. 23) alongside 'making up a story', 'play-acting' or 'guessing riddles'. One of the earliest mentions of *Eirōneia* occurs in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where irony involves playful understatement.³² 'Irony' is cited as the deficiency where truthfulness is the mean and boastfulness is the excess (II. 7. 1108a19-22). The magnanimous person is characterised as someone who is candid and straight-speaking except when public occasions demand a degree of self-deprecation or 'irony' (IV. 4. 1124b30; IV. 7. 1127a22f). In this case, virtuous individuals are permitted to use irony in order to win over an audience; appearing not to take themselves too seriously.

A single, unified account of irony proves problematic given the scope of what is deemed ironic and I agree with Peter Goldie's comments, in his review of Gregory Currie's 'pretence account' of irony:

One notable thing about irony is its multiple forms and uses, and the multiple ways in which irony is bound up with other kinds of trope and rhetorical device – litotes, bathos, hyperbole, metaphor, sarcasm, and many others ... As Currie himself accepts, 'Irony can become very complex' (158). Perhaps in the end trying to provide a *theory* of irony, whether the pretence theory or any other kind of theory, is as dangerous as trying to provide a theory of humour.

(Goldie 2011: 336)

Allusion is an example of another literary device that can be ironic: 'Most allusions serve to illustrate or clarify or enhance a subject, but some are used in order to undercut it

³² An earlier reference to irony occurs in Plato's *Republic* where Socrates takes on the mantle of *eiron*, the arch dissembler from Greek tragedy.

ironically by the discrepancy between the subject and the allusion' (Abrams 1993: 8). Allusion deserves separate comment at the end of this section.

When Goldie refers to the 'multiple forms' of irony, he may have the following candidates in mind:

- i) 'Verbal irony': this occurs when what is said is more, less or contrary to what is meant. Currie gives the nice example of saying 'you sure know a lot' to a knowledgeable bore (Currie 2010: 151).
- ii) 'Cosmic irony' expresses a sense of futility concerning human destiny. There are many examples in Alanis Morissette's song 'Ironie' including the opening lines: 'An old man turned ninety-eight/ He won the lottery and died the next day.'
- iii) 'Socratic irony': precisely what is meant by 'Socratic irony' is contentious (see the discussion in Vlastos 1991: 29-37). The term is frequently used to describe faux naivety on the part of Socrates who pretends not to have formulated views on a given topic when he has (*The Republic* 336c).
- iv) Some sarcasm may be ironic as in the case of extreme praise when we say 'that's interesting' and mean the opposite. Here a contrast is drawn between what someone finds genuinely interesting and what is not of interest. The ironist may wish to underscore his or her scorn by a recognisable tone.
- v) Dramatic irony occurs when the audience or readership is privy to information (often of a tragic nature) of which the characters in the fiction are not aware.
- vi) Situational irony occurs when events communicate more than their appearance as when I am stuck in a traffic jam on a road with severe speed restrictions.
- vii) 'Poetic justice' occurs when virtue is seen to be rewarded and vice punished in a particularly fitting way. I remember a draconian college official (and former military man) twisting his ankle while demonstrating the goose step to his grandson. This incident would not be ironic if the injury had occurred playing badminton.

I shall leave my account of irony flexible given that there are exceptions to essentialist accounts: Currie's example of verbal irony in (i), (vi) and (vii) above show that the traditional Ciceronian account of irony '...when your words differ from your thoughts' (*De Oratore* II. 67) is insufficient. Cases of (ii), (vi), (vii) together with ironic undercutting through allusion prove problematic for Currie's recent pretence account of irony which

states that the ironist pretends to have a certain outlook in order to comment on a given target (Currie 2010: 150-158). While literary fiction may depict situational irony, my primary focus in what follows is the other forms of irony identified above. I shall make the case in what follows that unravelling irony in many instances of its various forms exercises understanding in the five senses identified in section (3.2).

Recognising irony

In Conrad's short story 'An Outpost of Progress' the central characters Carlier and Kayerts are described as 'two pioneers of trade and progress' half way through the first part of the story. Yet there is implicit reference to these characters being ill-prepared and unsuited through their physical description, how they live together and how they are viewed by other characters. Take the following simile: 'They were like blind men in a large room, aware only of what came in contact with them (and of that only imperfectly), but unable to see the general aspect of things'. There is also explicit reference to the characters' 'stupidity and laziness'. One character says: 'Look at those two imbeciles. They must be mad at home to send me such specimens'. It is standard practice in close analysis of literary fiction to read the text more than once so it may also be supposed that anyone reading the description of Carlier and Kayerts as 'two pioneers of trade and progress' will be aware that at the end of the story Kayerts shoots Carlier before hanging himself. The upshot of this is that the description that 'Carlier and Kayerts are pioneers of trade and progress' is not true. The statement is ironic. So why not state explicitly that Carlier and Kayerts are not pioneers of trade and progress and leave things at that?

A literal, non-ironic description would not say as much as Conrad's ironic statement. In the case of a straightforward declaration such as 'Carlier and Kayerts are stupid and lazy' the reader is given the information. Yet in stating the patently false Conrad engages the reader in a process of discernment, understanding in sense (i) above, as to how these characters see themselves and how they are seen by other characters. In the case under discussion, the reader asks why these characters are described in these terms despite evidence to the contrary. Perhaps this is how Carlier and Kayerts see themselves though with some latent doubts. Perhaps it is how the imperialist company that employs Carlier and Kayerts want us to see this kind of employee. Perhaps it is how Mokola, the native charged with looking after the store, appears to treat them while conducting illicit business behind their backs

including the selling of workers into slavery - a crime to which Carlier and Kayerts become accessories. The ironic description prompts these interpretations of the text and in so doing prompts consideration of these characters in a wider frame of reference. These readings result from careful design on the ironist's part (we return to this point in section 4.7 below) and require sensitivity to nuance, an openness to there being more than one reading and critical judgement as to which reading forms the best interpretation on the reader's behalf. What is discerned can form part of an overall interpretation or reading of a text.

Recognising more subtle irony

Irony is not always as obvious as standard examples would have us believe: a standard example is stating 'that's interesting' when it is not. Sometimes detecting more subtle examples of irony requires the nose and tenacity of a truffle hound to dig further. Peter Goldie's comment, quoted above, draws our attention to the fact that irony may be embedded in other literary devices.

Consider the line in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* when Willy Loman says 'the world is an oyster, but you don't crack it open on a mattress'. In this example the irony occurs in the context of another literary device. The metaphor 'the world is your oyster' comes from Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* when Pistol says '...the world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open' (Act 2 Scene 2 lines 4-5) and the first part of this line has entered popular discourse. Miller revitalises the cliché with the additional clause 'but you don't crack it open on a mattress'. I detect irony in Miller's addition: the image of a mattress invites us to consider Loman's goal of amassing material goods, a significant part of the American dream and the kind of wealth you'd 'keep under a mattress' but which Loman lacks. Further, while 'oyster' carries sexual connotations as does Pistol's suggestion as to how it will be opened, the stark image of an unmade bed reminds us that Loman is having an affair with an unnamed colleague who he gives stockings to that were promised to his wife. Loman's womanising may be partly the result of having his ambitions fail. Certainly Loman does not follow the advice he gives to his sons at the time the metaphor occurs and such advice is framed ironically to comment on his own behaviour. The metaphor would not contain the same irony if the line ran 'The world is an oyster but you don't crack it open in your armchair'.

On one level, the reader discerns the meaning of the metaphor as it falls from the lips of Willy Loman who offers this as advice to his sons. On another level, the close reader also discerns the meaning of the metaphor as it works ironically in the context of the play. In the latter case of understanding, the close reader discerns the meaning of the ironic metaphor (sense i) and in discerning such a meaning is able to understand the play better through navigating the work's complexities (sense iii) before forming a reading or interpretation of the play (sense v). Let me say a little more about how understanding in senses (i-iv) feeds into understanding in sense (v).

Irony and interpretation

One of the most common comments I see written in the margins of an annotated literary text is 'ironic'. However, recognising that a line or phrase is ironic cannot be the sum cognitive benefit; the same applies to recognising a simile or that a line is alliterative. Detecting irony is only the first step in a cognitive process in which the careful reader needs to work out how X being ironic is significant. The cognitive potential of engaging with irony involves other skills such as: being able to chase an allusion, recognising the place of ironic comment in a repeated motif or, as Goldie suggests in his comment quoted at the start of this section, the detection of irony in other literary devices. In turn, the material gathered informs the reader's overall interpretation of a literary work.

In the following example, the *prima facie* dramatic irony does not add anything particularly relevant cognitively but does yield something interesting when we pay attention to one particular detail, namely the song lyrics. In Scene VII of *A Streetcar Named Desire* Stanley finds out about Blanche's past and informs his wife Stella (Blanche's sister) while Blanche takes a bath off stage unaware that her character is being denigrated by Stanley:

STANLEY: Our supply-man down at the plant has been going through Laurel for years and he knows all about her and everybody else in the town of Laurel knows all about her. She is as famous in Laurel as if she was the President of the United States, only she is not respected by any party! This supply-man stops at a hotel called the Flamingo.

BLANCHE (Singing blithely):

‘Say, it’s only a paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea –
But it wouldn’t be make-believe if you believed in me!’

A reading of the irony of this scene would be compromised should Blanche have been humming in the bath or singing an insignificant song. The lyrics prompt the audience to identify where the make-believe lies in the story acted out before us: who in the world of the story is asking who to believe what?³³ The answer to this question makes a comment on the play as a whole: the bond of trust never forms between Blanche and her hosts who find her unbelievable; fuelled by Stanley’s revelations quoted above. This mistrust culminates in Blanche being removed to an asylum in the final scenes. It is Stanley’s version of events, *his* make-believe that he didn’t try to rape Blanche, that is believed, largely owing to his insistent character. The audience are encouraged to form an interpretation of the play based on who they believe and on what grounds. In this example from *A Streetcar Named Desire* the reader is encouraged to look beyond the layer of dramatic irony to discover further ironic comment concerning mistrust and make-believe which in turn influences the reader’s interpretation of this play.

Chasing an allusion

Allusion is reference without explicit identification to: a person, place, event, or another work of art such as another literary work of art. Classical allusions and biblical allusions are frequent in literary fiction and we shall examine an example of the latter. Allusion opens up literary texts to a great deal of other material which helps the reader understand the literary work in the sense of forming an interpretation of the work (sense v). Hence the ability in a reader to be able to ‘chase an allusion’ successfully means that he or she is privy to the illuminating links between the literary work and what is alluded to. The cognitive potential is noted by one literary critic who says: ‘most allusions serve to illustrate or clarify or enhance a subject, but some are used in order to undercut it ironically by the discrepancy between the subject and the allusion’ (Abrams 1993: 8). What I am

³³ This theme of believing what is illusory is also reflected in Scene XI in the exchange between Stella and her neighbour, Eunice.

interested in pursuing is the benefit of allusion referring *without* explicit identification. Consider the following three extracts from Shakespeare:

SECOND MURDERER:

A bloody deed, and desperately dispatch'd!
How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
Of this most grievous murder! (Richard III I. 4. 269-271)

MACBETH:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red. (Macbeth II. 2. 60-63)

LADY MACBETH:

A little water clears us of this deed.
How easy it is then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended. (Macbeth II. 2.67-69).

All three references allude to Pilate's hand washing and its associations: power above the law, manipulation, pragmatic self-serving, the ease of self-exoneration, the questioning of truth. Yet unlike the first allusion, which makes the comparison explicit, the further two examples do not name Pilate. Direct referencing may sound pedestrian to an ideal readership who understands (in the sense of discernment) what is meant anyway. The cognitive gain lies in understanding (in senses ii, iii and iv) why such an allusion is being made and this task may take the reader more time and effort. I might suggest that the words of the second murderer make us think of a comparison between the character of Richard

III, as depicted in Shakespeare's play, and Pontius Pilate in terms of their shared isolation from the rest of the community and shared freedom from moral scruples to the extent that they both treat others as means and not ends. These thoughts are generated through the reader's active engagement with the text; if the same thoughts were served up as additional propositions then the reader is denied the opportunity to practice the process of active discovery.

If my general thesis applies to irony in literary fiction then I should be able to demonstrate that reading literary fiction and engaging with irony allows the reader to practise certain skills that relate to the senses of understanding above. I have argued that detecting simple irony allows the reader to practice discernment and, what is more, that more subtle cases of irony allow the reader to practice more subtle skills of discernment. Some, though not all cases, of irony allow the reader to navigate the literary work as a whole and reach a sense of what is going on in the bigger picture and how the literary work might be interpreted fruitfully. The resulting thought feeds into an interpretive hypothesis and I make the case that answering the question 'why state this ironically?' can form candidate interpretations of the literary text as a whole. Finally, both allusion and irony have in common the fact that what is stated conveys more than is explicitly stated.

4.2 Particularity and precision

The term 'particularity' in this context refers to the specific details recorded in a literary fictional work while the term 'precision' refers to the careful choice of words selected by the literary artist to convey a specific tone or meaning. Martha Nussbaum discusses particularity and precision in her *Love's Knowledge* and I contend that both terms are worth further attention to strengthen my thesis. In one passage Nussbaum argues as follows:

It is not surprising that we find in these novels a commitment to qualitative distinctions; one could hardly imagine a *literary* art without that commitment. But the novel is committed more deeply than many other forms to a multiplicity and fineness of such distinctions. The organizing vision of the novels shows that one thing is not just a different quantity of another, that there is not only no single metric along which the claims of different good things can be meaningfully

considered, there is not even a small plurality of such measures. The novels show us the worth and richness of plural qualitative thinking and engender in their readers a rich qualitative kind of seeing. The novelist's terms are even more variegated, more precise in their qualitative rightness, than are the sometimes blunt vague terms of daily life; they show us vividly what we can aspire to in refining our (already qualitative) understanding.

(Nussbaum 1992: 36)

Nussbaum claims that it is the full and fine detail, usually lacking in everyday description and in the concision of a philosopher's thought experiment (a favourite contrast for Nussbaum 1990: 88, 160-161, 227-228, 390) that contributes to the reader's cognitive gain. The qualitative distinctions standard to literary fiction enhances the cognitive gain of the reader in at least two ways: first by engendering 'a rich qualitative kind of seeing' and secondly by 'refining our (already qualitative) understanding'.

The analysis of understanding proposed in section (3.2) can shed more light on Nussbaum's claim that full and fine detail contributes to the reader's cognitive reward. In this section I want to say more about how the reader's engagement with particular detail precisely expressed exercises the relevant senses of understanding.

Particularity

One benefit of including particular detail, as Kathleen Wilkes points out (see section 3.1 above), is that the audience is privy to more information and consequently gains more knowledge about a particular situation. This is true whether the situation depicted is fictional or non-fictional. My cognitive argument based on understanding goes further than Wilkes suggests. Any cognitive engagement of the sort identified above (section 3.2) is relative to specific literary fictional texts but I hope that by exploring the opening description of Mr. Gradgrind from Dickens's *Hard Times* that the reader will gain a sense of the cognitive benefits in question.

Consider the following description:

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders, -nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was, - all helped the emphasis.

(Dickens 1989: 1-2)

We learn, from reading the passage above, that Gradgrind lectured the schoolmaster on the importance of facts in a schoolroom, that Gradgrind was bald and wore a neckcloth on this occasion. Knowing what goes on in a story or what a story is about is some cognitive gain. However, knowledge of what happens in the story is not the kind of cognitive gain that I seek to defend. There follows some suggestions as to what a reader might make of the passage. Whether this is a good reading of Dickens's description of Gradgrind is beyond the philosophical point, which is that it is a feature of literary fiction to include detail contrived by the author, in order to practice skills of close reading, which correspond to understanding in senses (i-iv) and the forming of an interpretation of a text which corresponds to understanding in sense (v).

A close reader could note the irony in the setting for Gradgrind's address; we expect to find intellectual vitality in a schoolroom yet the venue is described as an empty and tomblike 'vault'. A similar description is made of the 'commodious cellarage' behind

Gradgrind's eyes and his head is described as a 'warehouse-room for hard facts'. The close reader recognises certain conventions: that eyes symbolise the soul and that the face is an indication of character. We are not informed as to *what* is held here but only *where* such food for thought might be stored. The phrase 'as if the head had scarcely warehouse room' suggests that it might not. Gradgrind's forehead is likened to a wall suggesting obstructiveness, impediment and limitation. Gradgrind's hair is described in terms of a functional wind break in contrast to other foliage, mainly flowers, described in the novel as a source of aesthetic appreciation (1989: 8) and life-affirmation (1989: 15, 295). There is an understated humour in the implicit invitation to break open the pie crust to dine on the factual riches inside. 'Emphasis' forms a repeated motif in the passage and suggests that the speaker indulges more in a monotonous rhetoric of praising facts than in any worthwhile defence of this view of education. Gradgrind's forefinger, forehead, coat, legs and shoulders are all described as 'square' and a further geometrical image is presented in his 'underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve'. This repeated detail suggests a limited intellect, as when we might call someone 'square-headed', as well as suggesting conventionality, lack of elegance and a machine-like bearing. Gradgrind's delivery is described as 'inflexible, dry, and dictatorial'. However, the repetition of 'emphasis' and the imagery of emptiness temper our initial judgement that Gradgrind's speech is serious and raises the suspicion that he is more reliant on the force of rhetoric. Gradgrind's necktie is neat and functional but restrictive to the fundamental act of breathing; here the thought is that Gradgrind and M'Choakumchild (as his name suggests) are as restricted by their views of education as much as their pupils. A character's name is seldom chosen by chance by a literary author and the name 'Gradgrind' carries associations of monotonous, mechanical drudgery.

The fact that the close reader notices the kinds of details listed above constitutes understanding in the first sense, understanding as discernment, which may be necessary though not sufficient for the reader to develop other senses of understanding where further cognitive effort is required. Particular detail may be used, explicitly or more subtly, to juxtapose themes, characters or viewpoints in a way that invites the reader to draw reflective comparison. Close attention to detail also helps the reader to build up a picture of the fictional character as: monotonous, inflexible, dry, dictatorial, square-headed, unaccommodating, mechanical and the potential source of amusement, which helps develop understanding in sense (iv). Cognitive skills associated with juxtaposition are worth a little more attention given the prevalence of this device in literary fiction.

Following our close reading of the passage above, the reader is alerted to similar descriptions of Gradgrind elsewhere in *Hard Times*, so we note a parallel when Gradgrind approaches the subject of his daughter, Louisa, marrying Mr. Bounderby:

The barriers were too many and too high for such a leap. With his unbending, utilitarian matter-of-fact face, he hardened against her again; and the moment shot away into the plumbless depths of the past, to mingle with all the lost opportunities that are drowned there.

(Dickens 1989: 132)

A further parallel is invited between Gradgrind and Louisa in the following passage from Book Two:

In face she was no less remarkable than in manner. Her features were handsome; but their natural play was so locked up, that it seemed impossible to guess at their genuine expression. Utterly indifferent, perfectly self-reliant, never at a loss, and yet never at ease, with her figure in company with them there, and her mind apparently quite alone – it was of no use “going in” yet awhile to comprehend this girl, for she baffled all penetration.

(Dickens 1989: 169)

While both faces share the same inscrutability, the later passage suggests that there is more behind Louisa’s visage than that of her father. On occasion, juxtaposition is encouraged explicitly as when Bounderby is reminded of his wedding vows by Gradgrind with the same words that Bounderby dismissed Stephen Blackpool (1989: 324). On other occasions juxtaposition is encouraged in the slightest phrase as when Louisa, who earlier is portrayed as ‘so locked up’ and ‘never at a loss’, is said to have her ‘feelings long suppressed broke loose’ (1989: 291). Comparison is encouraged through implicit juxtaposition of detail and not explicitly drawn in the text by stating ‘Gradgrind had less emotional intelligence than his daughter’. Of course, readers may find instances where concealed themes are made explicit, for instance when Gradgrind draws a distinction between ‘wisdom of the head’ and ‘wisdom of the heart’ (1989: 297) in an embarrassingly simplistic way. Inviting comparison implicitly rather than making explicit comparison requires readers to move from an awareness of what is happening in the story to contemplation of the significance of

what is happening in the story. The fact that juxtaposition is often concealed provides for better practice in the skill of discerning significance which may be used to cognitive effect in extra-literary settings.

A salient skill in recognising the significance of detail involves making connections between particular information. Here are two examples from *Hard Times*. Many details carry commonplace connotations: vault, square, the crust of a plum pie. Making such associations in each case is not the final word as the reader then draws links between the range of associations we have made, for instance, with the word 'vault'. We then recognise, for instance, that there is a theme of emptiness running through the passage: a vault like school room, Gradgrind's empty rhetoric and his head described as 'warehouse space'. The reader is able to make connections between these points which lays important foundations for the reader's final interpretation of the work. Secondly, it is common practice in close reading to spot repeated words, like 'square' and 'emphasis', but such an exercise on its own would seem a futile task without some speculation on the significance of these words. Having identified an initial repeated pattern of words, the reader continues to be on the look-out for the same word and in order to reflect on the similarities and differences in uses. Making connections and spotting patterns are examples of understanding in sense (iii), while ordering the material into some form of interpretive hypothesis is an example of understanding in sense (v).

Particular detail and interpretation

There are at least two distinctive senses of 'interpretation' at play during the close analysis of a literary work. First, we may say that a reader interprets a particular detail in a certain way, as we may say that a reader interprets a metaphor, irony or symbolism in a certain way. Secondly, we talk about the reader forming an interpretation of the work as a whole when he or she draws the interpretive threads, in the first sense, together. I shall use 'interpretation' to refer predominantly to the second sense.

It is standard practice to read a literary text with one's mind attentive to the significance of detail; the reader approaches all detail included in a literary work with a view that it may be significant even if it does not turn out to be so. The potential significance of detail leads the reader to try out hypotheses concerning individual instances in order to see how fruitful

such an interpretation is (in the first sense identified in the preceding paragraph). Some points might be dropped from a broader interpretation if they exist in isolation, for example the reference to the schoolroom as a vault being *funereal* does not seem to link to any other major theme whereas the association with *emptiness* does forge connections with other points. Associating the schoolroom with funereal imagery is not wrong but is not obviously connected with other material so fits on the edge of the coherent web of interpretation (in the second sense identified in the preceding paragraph). The interpreter forms a coherent reading of a given work in such a way so as to acknowledge a work's complexity but does not need to offer a comprehensive commentary on a work.

So far, I have argued that the detail included in literary fiction does not only provide more information, this generic benefit of specifying detail occurs in manifold cases from archaeology to police work, but that particular detail in literary fiction is often contrived by the author to prove fruitful for the reader's exercising a range of interpretive skills. The resulting material is then arranged in some kind of coherent order as the reader's interpretation of the literary fictional work and may be tested against other reader's interpretive hypotheses. I leave discussion of the link between cognitive gain and aesthetic appreciation to section (4.7) and shall continue to pursue how different features standard to literary fiction engage a range of generic skills to cognitive benefit.

Precision

A philosopher may be precise in argument and a scientist precise in taking measurements but neither is the relevant sense of precision for literary fiction. It is, rather, the selection of a specific word or phrase to capture a specific event, gesture, look or mood in a fitting way; to the extent that we might say that only *that* particular word will do (Nussbaum 1990: 34, 154). The case has been made by Kathleen V. Wilkes (see section 3.1 above) that there is cognitive value in common sense psychological description owing to the precise use of descriptive terms. Subtle and nuanced differences in meaning are brought out by a close analysis of the connotations or commonplace associations of words or phrases such as 'craving', 'hoping', or 'longing for.' The etymology of 'nuance' shows that the word was first used as a description of judging between colours and sound. As different words may be used to differentiate between slightly different colours so different words may be

used to differentiate and describe different meanings. The precise choice of words neither depends on the amount of descriptive terms we have at our disposal nor the fact that many words have many synonyms, but the use *apparent* synonyms can be put to in order to pick out important differences.

I should acknowledge that not all literary fiction is read so meticulously all the time. For one thing, classic works are often so lengthy as to prohibit such detailed reading. For another, such a continuous close reading would distract from the overall flow. This observation about standard reading practice in no way diminishes the importance of the role of close reading. In fact, the observation underscores the importance of reading *some* passages closely. Likely candidates might be passages that appear early on in a work, passages which stand out as dense in detail and literary device, and passages which have at least obviously significant detail. The reader of literary fiction reads richer passages more carefully but is free to read other passages, which merely advance the plot, in a quicker and lighter manner.

Sensitivity to association

Consider the following passage chosen from Chapter Two of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*:

The bottle of whisky – a second one – was now in constant demand by all present, excepting Catherine, who 'felt just as good on nothing at all'. Tom rang for the janitor and sent him for some celebrated sandwiches, which were a complete supper in themselves. I wanted to get out and walk eastward toward the park through the soft twilight, but each time I tried to go I became entangled in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair. Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I saw him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.

(Scott Fitzgerald 1979: 41-42)

It is a useful exercise in close reading to ask oneself why the author has chosen a particular word or phrase and then decide on how an answer fits into one's overall interpretation of a work. This line is developed a little further in the next section on metaphor. The precise choice of words can be communicated by an author via hesitation or negativity (these devices are not used above): Was it awe, obsession or possession? No, it was enchantment.

Fitzgerald chooses the word 'enchanted' over 'possessed', 'entranced', 'awestruck' or 'mesmerized'. To be enchanted is to be 'bewitched' or 'spellbound' in a way that fits smitten lovers. There is a suggestion in the use of 'enchanted' (brought out more in the noun 'enchantment') that the person is captivated against his will with consequences that are not beneficial; perhaps he fails to see things clearly in a way that affects his judgement. The choice of 'repelled' carries visceral connotations as when someone has a gut reaction to something. The word chosen is not as strong as 'disgusted', nor as pathological as 'sickened' or 'nauseated' nor as cerebral as 'snubbed' nor as morally judgmental as 'offended' or 'appalled'.

Precise use of language plays an important role not just in describing the character's mental states but also their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. For instance, the argument that pulls Carraway back is described as 'strident', not violent or warring as this choice of words would indicate too much energy, neither 'scathing' nor 'caustic' as these terms focus too much on the content of what the argument is about, not 'raucous' either as this word is too associated with the volume of the discussion. The choice of 'strident' alerts us to a forcefulness and energy in putting one's point to, or maybe 'at', one's audience.

Understanding in sense (i) is at work when the close reader discerns the subtle differences in meaning between words like 'enchanted' and 'awestruck'. Specifying the exact sense of a word informs the reader's understanding as to why a character said or did such and such and this understanding (in sense (ii)) can be applied to another passage in the same novel or play. Skills of navigation, understanding in sense (iii), are required in order to determine which commonplace associations are relevant in a given context. Further, words such as 'snubbed' or 'appalled' resonate on an experiential level which assists the reader in understanding what it is meant to be like for the characters portrayed. The author's choice of words and phrases in a text generates this material which may be used in forming an interpretation of the literary work as a whole.

The reader's engagement with the precise choice of words used in literary fiction goes to further illustrate the relationship between understanding in senses (i-iv) and understanding in sense (v). Close analysis of a precise term exercises understanding in senses (i-iv). The connotations or associations of a particular word or phrase relies on how our language is generally used so may change over time. Also, some associations may be peculiar to individual readers or categories of readers. For instance a stork may represent birth to a reader from the West but represent death to a reader from the Far East. The material gathered from close reading then becomes the subject for the reader forming an interpretation of the material gathered from close reading. Let me end this section with two examples of forming an interpretation of the material which constitute instances of understanding in the sense (v) above.

Magnets are attracted and repelled in unconscious movement and so Carraway, and to some extent Gatsby, are attracted to and repelled by the social circles that they move in. Nick's attitude to the party mirrors that of the party's host, Gatsby. So in understanding Nick's attitude to the party one, concurrently, understands a little more about Gatsby's attitude to the roaring festivities. We recognise that Gatsby's concern isn't the party per se but it's potential to attract Daisy. A reader may judge that the comparison between Carraway and Gatsby is the most fecund line to pursue and a coherent way of arranging the material previously cited on the back of a close reading of the particular language used in this extract. As a consequence, one's interpretation may run: 'The eponymous hero, Gatsby, like Carraway in the extract, is attracted by the forceful energy of the party goers but is also removed. In part, this is owing to his manipulation of their pleasure for another, private end. Yet, like the party goers, Gatsby is under the spell of this private goal in a way that is restrictive, myopic and captivating to a potentially corrupting degree'. An analysis of this passage from Scott Fitzgerald shows how understanding in the sense of discernment (of association and tone) can feed into understanding in the sense of interpretation (sense v).

One skill at work is the reader's ability to make connections and discern a pattern in the carefully chosen words where the reader then speculates on their collective significance. This is not really exemplified in the Gatsby example so let us turn to the opening chapter of Jane Austen's *Emma* (too long to quote here). The sensitive reader will note that the

words: ‘evils’, ‘alloy’, ‘danger’, ‘misfortunes’, ‘loss’ and ‘grief’, stand out as incongruous in paragraphs four and five by way of contrast to the apparently idyllic initial description of Emma and her ‘situation’. The reader might then speculate that Emma is overreacting to her governess Miss Taylor leaving the Woodhouse household to get married or believe that these strong terms signify an underpinning insecurity caused by Emma losing her mother when five and in spite of her material comfort. These possibilities or interpretive hypotheses are then carried through when reading the rest of the work and are either substantiated, modified or rejected according to what sort of textual evidence is encountered. The fact that this kind of work may be carried out on longer works of literary fiction, such as the two novels mentioned, shows that sensitivity to association and its place in an interpretation are not just ways of reading poetry but are applicable when reading literary fiction in general.

4.3 Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech which invites us to think of one thing as or in terms of another thing where the two things are not usually associated with one another but where at least one common characteristic exists. L.P. Hartley’s *The Go Between* begins: ‘The past is another country, they do things differently there’. Talking or writing metaphorically joins giving an order, forming a hypothesis or telling a joke in the multiplicity of language games (*Philosophical Investigations* I. 23). Here the term ‘language-game’ brings into prominence the fact that language is part of a cultural activity. It is noteworthy that while one *gives* an order, *forms* a hypothesis or *tells* a joke, the speaker *creates*, *devises* or *uses* a metaphor. The choice of verbs suggests artisanship; which is to say there is a craft to turning a good metaphor. Aristotle identified the devising of metaphors as a good indication of intellectual capability of a sort that cannot be learnt ‘...since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars’ (*Poetics* 1459a).

Metaphor occurs frequently in our communication. When philosophers talk about ‘*following the laws of logic to reach a conclusion*’ they have used three metaphors. Metaphor is used to multiple ends in addition to enhancing understanding: they amuse, entertain, show off, bamboozle or parody metaphor itself. On occasion, metaphor and other related tropes may contribute nothing or even detract from cognitive value. I found the following simile excessive when reading Lionel Shriver’s *We Need To Talk About Kevin*:

It seemed so unfair. You were clearly choked up, filled to the back of your throat with wonderment that defied expression. It was like watching you lick an ice cream cone that you refused to share.

(Shriver 2003: 97)

This section limits discussion to how the rich metaphors and related tropes prominent in literature can help the reader develop a better understanding. I have simile, metonymy, synecdoche, anthimeria, anthropomorphism and personification in mind when I say ‘other tropes’.

There are numerous accounts of metaphor: most recently Kendall Walton’s thesis that a metaphor is a stipulation that something serve as a prop in a game of make believe (Walton 2015: 183-184) and James Grant’s Minimal Thesis which holds that what is compared must share some likeness (2013: 87). However, what I have to say about the cognitive gain from metaphor is not tied to any particular philosophical account of metaphor. My main contention is that a significant source of cognitive gain is found in a metaphor’s pragmatic and not semantic effects.

The distinction between the semantics and pragmatics of metaphor is drawn in the Davidson-Black debate of the 1960s and 1970s (Black 1962: 30). The disagreement centred on three claims made by Black: that there are loose rules of language that determine whether an expression counts as metaphor (Black 1962: 29); that metaphor can extend the meaning of words (1962: 27, 31); and that something special occurs when a reader makes a connection between the elements of a metaphor (1962: 39). Davidson denies each of these claims, arguing that: ‘... understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavour as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules...There are no instructions for devising metaphors; there is no manual for determining what a metaphor “means” or “says”...(Davidson 2001a: 245). Davidson offers an account of compositional semantics where: ‘What metaphor adds to the ordinary is an achievement that uses no semantic resources beyond the resources on which the ordinary depends’ (Davidson 2001a: 245). The swans depicted in Yeats’ poem ‘Wild Swans at Coole’ may be a metaphor for the transience of beauty, the inevitability of exile or of romantic love but the semantic meaning of ‘swans’ in the title of the poem refers directly to the bird and not to these further associations in the same way that ‘Coole’ refers specifically to the stately home near Gort in County Galway. I want to start with some comment on how the game of

metaphor is played before attending to two examples of the reader understanding something better as a result of engaging with metaphor.

The pragmatic analysis of metaphor

Philosophers have puzzled over how a statement that is either patently false or trivially true can have such excellent communicative power. When Donne meditates that ‘No man is an island/ Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.’ He makes one statement that is trivially true and one that is literally false respectively but to draw this to our attention is to distract from Donne’s point that no human should be existentially isolated. I share Lakoff’s and Johnson’s concerns:

[Metaphors] are typically viewed within philosophy as matters of “mere language,” and philosophical discussions of metaphor have not centered on their conceptual nature, their contribution to understanding, or their function in cultural reality. Instead, philosophers have tended to look on metaphors as out-of-the-ordinary imaginative or poetic linguistic expressions, and their discussions have centred on whether these linguistic expressions can be *true*.

(Lakoff and Johnson 1980:159 italics in original)

As a result, I suggest that we put patent falsehood and trivial truth to one side as to make too much of this is to miss how the game of metaphor is played.

By way of illustration, consider the following exchange that took place when Michael Parkinson interviewed Richard Burton in 1974:

BURTON (talking about his former heavy drinking): I’ve been there. I’ve seen that dark wood. I know how terrible it is. How frightful it is. How frightening it is. But I went there and came back.

PARKINSON: What did you see when you were there?

(Burton pauses, looks to the ceiling, shuffles in his chair and is temporarily lost for words)

Of course Parkinson’s question attempts to move the conversation along, and he might even be joining in the game of metaphor in a pedestrian way, but his follow up question

strikes me, as it seemed to strike Burton, as odd. Of course there is nothing to see - it's a metaphor. Burton uses the metaphor of looking into a dark wood to convey the primeval, even childlike, fear of being on the edge of encountering something unknown and potentially dangerous which motivates his timely retreat from such an encounter. It is possible to spoil a metaphor as one can spoil a joke.

Donald Davidson says that: 'Joke or dream or metaphor can, like a picture or bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact – but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact' (2001a: 262). The analogy with humour is worth pursuing a little further to illustrate the game with language that is being played out. Both metaphors and jokes: violate convention, are unpredictable, incongruous, awkward and playful. There is an assumed cognitive distance to humour; we take the falsehood that 'such and such a man walked into a bar' to deliver his lines as an attempt to entertain rather than deceive us. There is also a cognitive distance in metaphor and we assume that when L. P. Hartley says 'the past is another country' he is not making a mistake in history or geography. Metaphors and jokes are not intended to be woven into a backcloth of true or false propositions.

The fictional status of metaphors and jokes does some work here. We are required to entertain or imagine that a chicken crossed the road or that nothing nurturing can *stick* to Caliban's nature (*The Tempest* IV.1.189) but not *believe* these things; though such tropes may eventually help to establish beliefs. Setting truth conditions aside does not mean that jokes or metaphors cannot convey something insightful. We may laugh at the absurdity of what is depicted and laugh all the more in recognition of the accuracy of the portrayal. A metaphor may make us smile at its incongruity but the smile may also be in recognition of an insight. I shall argue, along with Davidson, that 'What distinguishes metaphor is not meaning but use -' (Davidson 2001a: 259) and attempt to say a little more about how metaphors are used to a cognitive purpose.

Davidson accepts that metaphor has cognitive value: 'No doubt metaphors often make us notice aspects of things we did not notice before; no doubt they bring surprising analogies and similarities to our attention...' (2001a: 261). The point is that the cognitive gain from metaphor takes place as part of a pragmatic analysis of the metaphor and not from a semantic analysis of what the words in a metaphor mean. A semantic analysis of a sentence concerns the context-independent meaning of that sentence. When I say 'the bar was lively last night' I mean that 'a designated social area was occupied by people carousing to a higher degree than average'. A pragmatic analysis of a sentence takes into consideration the context of that utterance including the speaker's intention and the effect a given

sentence may have. An overworked and undervalued bar worker who says ‘the bar was lively last night’ may intend that the boss raises the worker’s salary. A member of the college’s rugby team may remind his teammate that ‘the bar was lively last night’ to encourage an embarrassing recollection for humorous effect. In what follows, I shall make the case that the cognitive capacities that lead to a better understanding arise from the pragmatic upshot and not the semantic effect of metaphor.

This account should not neglect the emotional and experiential effects of metaphor. An emphasis on the pragmatics of metaphor takes the non-propositional into account. Towards the end of ‘What Metaphors Mean’ Donald Davidson says that: ‘What we notice or see is not, in general, propositional in character’ (Davidson 2001a: 263). Metaphors allow the reader access to experiences that are difficult to put into words. Consider the following example from a description of a celebrity visit to Kibera in Kenya for Comic Relief:

Lenny Henry was with Sanusi and his family: eight children in a single bed, packed like dates in a box; all their wellbeing dependent on their dad’s ability to sell handmade samosas, cooked in a cauldron by the roadside.

‘You’re always smiling,’ Henry said, humbled by Sanusi’s ostensible cheer. ‘Always smiling.’

‘I smile – otherwise, what will my kids think?’ Sanusi said. ‘They must think there is hope. But I,’ he said, still smiling, ‘have given up hope.’

And you suddenly saw what that smile was, as you looked closer. It’s how a rabbit smiles in a field of foxes.

(Moran 2012: 299)

The metaphor of the last line carries emotional resonance despite being unoriginal, incongruous and unrealistic: a field of foxes is a freak occurrence and rabbits don’t smile. The metaphor works by encouraging a sudden flash of recognition in the reader. It conveys the anguish and bravery of this man by drawing to our attention to what kind of smile this really is: a smile of desperation. The emotional reaction comes after the kind of smile has been identified through figurative language.

David Lodge helps us understand how this process of recognition through figurative language works and sets the scene as follows:

...literature is a record of human consciousness, the richest and most comprehensive we have. Lyric poetry is arguably man's most successful effort to describe qualia. The novel is arguably man's most successful effort to describe the experience of individual human beings moving through space and time.

(Lodge 2002: 10)

There are many reasons why literary language is rich. In the course of Lodge's discussion: metaphor, first person narrative and free indirect discourse are cited as examples of how literary devices are effective in communicating experience. We have already seen that carefully chosen words differentiate between apparent synonyms owing to a unique mix of associations. In addition, a word may have a particularly relevant etymology, allude to another literary text or be onomatopoeic. Lodge's point builds on the premise that the choice of the right word is important by further arguing that it is not solely the choice of word that is important but how the word is used as part of the literary device. Lodge says of metaphor and simile:

Whiteness is white, coldness is cold. There is no literal, referential description of such things that is not tautological. But in literature, by describing each quale in terms of something else that is both similar and different – "a salt cave", "a theatre of whiteness", "like frozen waves"- the object and the experience of it are vividly simulated. One sensation is invoked to give specificity to another.

(Lodge 2002: 13)

So, it is not just the meaning of the words chosen that assist our understanding but also the words' wider associations. Authors of literary fiction play with language in a way that draws out associations that may not otherwise be made. In order for the reader to extract maximum cognitive benefit from many literary metaphors, he or she is required to compile commonplace associations and to decide which associations are relevant or not. This decision depends on context; to call someone a wolf might signify that they are fierce, clannish, hirsute or hungry.

In contrast, to understand an idiom it is sufficient to possess propositional knowledge of what the phrase refers to, that 'it is raining cats and dogs' means 'precipitation is heavy and prolonged' and where any further knowledge of the etymology of this phrase is a cognitive bonus consisting in the same kind of propositional knowledge. Unlike metaphor, our understanding of this idiomatic phrase does not involve our identifying commonplace associations such as dogs are loyal and cats are independent. This is significant when it

comes to the reader identifying the relevant connotations to metaphor which, in turn, will feed into a reader's overall interpretation of a literary work. I need to demonstrate that the reader's engagement with the pragmatics of metaphor contributes to the reader's understanding in the senses of discernment, application, know-how, experiential knowledge and interpretation.

The close reading of metaphor: two examples

Metaphors are legion and I shall concentrate on two heavily metaphorical passages from Shakespeare. The first passage is from *Titus Andronicus*:

TAMORA: Know, thou sad man, I am not Tamora:

She is thy enemy and I thy friend.

I am Revenge, sent from th'infernal kingdom

To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind

*By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.*³⁴

This metaphor from *Titus* suggests that revenge is separate from an individual's mental preoccupations and works towards alleviating such preoccupations. Shakespeare could have identified revenge with a gnawing vulture but chooses instead to portray revenge as offering short-lived, therapeutic respite and in so doing reconfigures a widespread perception about revenge. An important role is attributed in Catherine Elgin's work to reconfiguration through 'telling instances'.³⁵ By 'reconfiguration' is meant the construal of something in a different way so as to produce hitherto unrecognised cognitive

³⁴ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. J. Bate (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1995), V.2.28-32.

³⁵ Elgin (1993: 17-1; 1996: 173-175, 200ff; 2002:3, 6-7; 2004: 125; 2007: 46). In a parallel move, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:81) talk about the metaphor 'argument is war' superimposing 'the multidimensional structure' of one thing, war, upon the corresponding structure of another, conversation. Elisabeth Camp mirrors Elgin's point when she says in her discussion of extended metaphor from the Old Testament: '...what the story does is to cause [the reader] to restructure the relative prominence of these facts and the explanatory connections among them' (Camp 2008 :10).

advantage. Part of the significance of Tamora's metaphor concerns how a common perception is challenged by how the relations of the elements of the metaphor are set up and how our thinking about a given topic, in this case revenge, is reconfigured. Elgin says:

[Metaphor] equips us to recognize new likenesses and differences, patterns and discrepancies both within and across domains. It enables us to draw on cognitive resources we have developed elsewhere to advance our understanding of a given realm. It provides resources for asking questions and exploring hypotheses that could neither have been framed nor motivated without then partition of the domain that the metaphor supplies. When these resources and abilities constitute or contribute to cognitive progress, metaphor advances cognition.

(Elgin 2002: 6)

This quotation by Elgin suggests some of the skills pertinent to engaging with metaphor that also map on to my senses of understanding outlined earlier; for instance the capacity to call a default assumption into question falls under sense (ii) of understanding.

There is a preliminary, 'free association of ideas' stage to close reading. Consider how a teacher of literature might encourage the process of creative speculation in students. He or she could draw up a list of associations of 'A' (vultures) and another list of associations of 'B' (revenge) and then plot which are the significant associations and which are irrelevant. This initial free association of ideas enjoys an expansive domain though I would not want to overstate the case by claiming that an infinite number of connotations can be given as is claimed by Davidson (2001a: 263). Connotations are variously described as 'commonplace associations' (Black 1962) and 'credence properties' (Beardsley 1978: 8); the work done in establishing such is compatible with both Davidson's and Black's view of metaphor. Black points out that what is needed on behalf of the reader is not just knowledge of the semantic meaning of terms used in the metaphor but an acquaintance with the 'system of associated commonplaces' i.e. the main associations with such terms. Black describes acquaintance with associated commonplaces as 'the common possession of the members of some speech community' (1962: 40). When the relevant comparisons are chosen the teacher might draw an arrow from one element to the other and then explain how this link relates to a broader theme in the literary work.

A close reader speculates on why the author presents such and such an image by contrasting the chosen image with what might have been chosen. The fact that a vulture is

chosen as opposed to another creature invites the reader to entertain the common connotations of the word 'vulture'. Animals are popular subjects for metaphors as the author is able to make use of various folk associations, in this case that vultures are voracious scavengers and harbingers of death. It is irrelevant that neither vultures nor revenge are vegetables and that both words contain the letter 'v'. The close reader identifies salient features of a given image before making some suggestions as to how what is salient about the imagery is salient for the literary work as a whole. The opportunity to exercise these kinds of capacities is missing in our reading a non-metaphorical paraphrase such as 'revenge is therapy'.

There are additional points to notice about this metaphor. Line 31 might have referred to the 'gnawing vultures of thy mind', but vulture is expressed as a singular noun making the connection between 'vulture' and 'mind' explicit. The trope does not refer to a vulture in the mind but the mind as a vulture, perhaps feeding off the individual's preoccupations. The word 'gnawing', not a word usually associated with the tearing and ripping feeding habits of vultures, offers an additional metaphor of persistence and of 'getting to the core' of something. Line 31 might have referred to revenge as *ending* not *easing* the gnawing vulture of thy mind. Ease is a temporary abatement and it is ironic that such a promise of respite, however momentary, is delivered by a messenger from hell. Detecting layers of meaning in a metaphor in this way constitutes understanding in the sense of discernment. The cognitive skills involved in this process are the ability to freely associate in a thorough manner, to distinguish what is relevant in the comparison and to select material for a potentially illuminating reading of a literary text.

In this example, the reader's close reading of metaphor generates material for an interpretive hypothesis of the play. I might say that *Titus Andronicus* is a play about revenge and that reading the work teaches us, among other things, that it is possible to view revenge as something separate from what preys on my mind rather than as something that is preying on my mind. I might say that the play shows that revenge can offer abatement to anxiety, that this abatement is only temporary and that the existence of revenge then feeds off my anxiety. Of course, this will only be part of a much broader interpretation of the play but seems a salient part. Metaphors can make us see something in light of or in terms of something else, encourage new and surprising connections between things and bring out the importance of some things relative to others.

The second example is from *Macbeth*:

MACBETH: Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more:

Macbeth does murder sleep, the innocent sleep,

Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care

The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,

Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,

*Chief nourisher in life's feast.*³⁶

I draw the reader's attention to this second metaphor as it shares the cognitive potential of the previous trope but in addition, carries further potential to stimulate understanding in sense (ii) through encouraging juxtaposition of characters and encourages understanding in sense (iii) through locating the metaphor in a wider pattern of imagery used throughout the play. The metaphor 'Macbeth does murder sleep' is both arresting and puzzling. The reader is invited to pose the question 'whose sleep does Macbeth murder?' and posit an answer such as 'his own and that of his wife'. It might be that Macbeth's crime is so heinous that it is described in terms of the destruction of some Platonic form of sleep or serenity but I shall take the line to mean that Macbeth has disturbed his conscience. The metaphor is ironic as Macbeth has just murdered Duncan and his aids while they were asleep but note that the present tense is used: 'Macbeth does murder sleep'; Macbeth's fated insomnia is an on-going predicament.

For the reader to understand the significance of Macbeth's murdering sleep, some comparison is required between the parallel cases of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's sleeplessness. The close reader exercises understanding in the second sense by working out why these characters cannot sleep. At the point in the play when Macbeth issues the metaphors recorded above, Lady Macbeth warns him to stop his deliberations as thinking too much in this way will result in a deviation from the task in hand and the potential for madness as a result of experiencing scruples. Both characters have their sleep disturbed but while Macbeth cannot sleep, his wife falls asleep but sleep walks. While the former cannot sleep as his conscience is pricked, the latter's subconscious is not disturbed by moral scruples but desires to remove herself from an unbecoming situation. Further, an attentive reader or theatregoer would be struck by Lady Macbeth's later reference 'You lack the

³⁶ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. A.R. Braunmuller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) II.2.38-43.

season of all natures, sleep' (III. 4.141) after the uncomfortable dinner scene when Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost. In this case the reader may be reminded of these earlier metaphors of sleep quoted above. It is not that Lady Macbeth is impervious to the effects of a guilty conscience rather that she is pragmatically manipulative of conscience as she is with everything else in order to achieve her ambitions. Metaphor supplies the means for the close reader to draw a comparison between Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's sleeplessness to the benefit of gaining hitherto unnoticed aspects of both characters. This cognitive process in the reader is a case of understanding in the sense of being able to apply what is understood to similar cases, termed 'application' above.

There is a widespread tendency when writing about metaphor, even when writing on metaphors that are more elaborate than the standard 'A is a B' kind, to ignore the role that metaphor can play in developing broader motifs that may run throughout the literary text.³⁷ Numerous literary metaphors form part of a much wider network of imagery. To ignore this fact is to miss something important about the effect that the metaphor has on its audience. Take as an example, the description of sleep as that which 'knits up the ravelled sleeve of care.' This metaphor is not just an image of restoration along with the other comparisons of sleep as a bath or balm but points to some enhancement of a fabric. A footnote in the Arden edition of the play (1992: 54) suggests the word 'sleave' refers to a filament of silk obtained from a thicker strand or 'coarse silk'. On this reading the metaphor compares sleep to the interweaving of silk through a garment in that both are an invisible source of durability, comfort and refinement though may not always be appreciated for these benefits. The metaphor in line 40 forms part of a pattern of clothing imagery which runs through the play, and contrasts to various references to ill-fitting clothing: Macbeth asks the three weird sisters 'why do you dress me in borrowed robes' (I. 3. 108-109) and Angus says of Macbeth 'Now does he feel his title hang loose about him, like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief' (V. 2. 22). One might say that Macbeth is uncomfortable in his own clothes where clothes signify rank and role as we say someone is uncomfortable in their own skin. In this case, the reader directs and manages a complex and is able to draw on elements from that complex quickly and adroitly. These skills fall under 'understanding' in sense (iii) identified above.

In brief summary, I have suggested that the reader's engagement with metaphor involves the following examples of close analysis: the identification and speculation as to the

³⁷ Soskice (1985: 29) criticises Davidson's tendency to favour metaphors of the 'A is a B' form; though Davidson's comment on T.S. Eliot's 'The Hippopotamus' (2001: 261) shows that he takes other forms into consideration.

significance of commonplace associations of a metaphor, reconfiguration of themes, placing metaphor in a wider pattern of imagery in a literary work and juxtaposition of characters. Understanding in the senses identified above as discernment, application and navigation provide a useful explanatory grammar as to what is going on in each case but how does the material generated from the close reading of metaphor feed into the reader's interpretation of a literary work? In the case of the second metaphor from *Macbeth*, the reader might offer by way of an interpretation of the line 'Macbeth does murder sleep' that: 'Sleep equates with conscience; Macbeth violates conscience as he does sleep. Both sleep and conscience are restorative which makes the violation more heinous. The violation is an on-going state of mind rather than a discrete act performed at a specific time and place. Macbeth cannot extricate himself from this state of mind as his wife attempts to do through an arch manipulation of conscience. As a consequence, Macbeth is a prisoner to his own rejection of conscience.'

Two things are noteworthy from the reader exercising understanding in sense (v), that is the development of a reading or interpretation. First, the reader's interpretation is gained on the back of material gathered from exercising the previous senses of understanding. Secondly, the interpretive hypotheses of both metaphors in *Titus* and *Macbeth* are hypotheses on how revenge and conscience are presented in the respective literary fictional works while at the same time candidate hypotheses about revenge and conscience in general. I shall resist the obvious move which would be to say that reading literary fiction provides useful hypotheses to test against the world and rather argue that reading literary fiction allows me to practise useful skills that I can also exercise in the world, one of which is hypothesis formation and hypothesis testing. I leave discussion on how understanding a literary work relates to understanding the world beyond the literary work until the last chapter but flag up this issue in advance.

4.4 Perspective

The term 'perspective' or 'point of view' refers to the relation of the narrator to the story. As one literary critic puts it: '[point of view is] the mode or perspective established by the author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, actions, setting, and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction' (Abrams 1993: 165). Another literary critic describes the perspective from which a story is told as '...arguably the most

important single decision that the novelist has to make, for it fundamentally affects the way readers will respond, emotionally and morally, to the fictional characters and their actions' (Lodge 1992: 26). It is standard practice for a reader of literary fiction to be attentive to whether the story is told from a first person standpoint, a third person standpoint, multiple perspectives or from the perspective of an omniscient narrator who enjoys privileged access to the past, future and the hidden thoughts of the central characters. It is also standard practice in reading literary fiction, less so in non-literary fiction, to award thinking time to the significance of a change of perspective.

I want to draw attention to the fact that a reader's engagement with perspective contributes to cognitive gain in ways that go beyond accruing more information. My arguments rest on the way literary fiction can play with perspective in ways that stimulate understanding in senses (i-v). Before we explore some examples of play with perspective and the respective cognitive gain, I wish to make the contrast between gaining knowledge from multiple perspectives and a reader's exercising his or her understanding explicitly. Consider the following extract from Virginia Woolf *The Waves*:

We have come together (from the North, from the South, from Susan's farm, from Louis' house of business) to make one thing, not enduring – for what endures? –but seen by many eyes simultaneously. There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves – a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution.

(Woolf 1993: 80)

In fiction, as in life, one is able to gather more information from adopting more than one point of view on a given subject. The standard analogy is perception through sight yet the analogy with sight does not capture enough of the process of active discovery found in the reader adopting different perspectives presented in a literary work. Novels can lead the reader through the details of how a character works out a given point of view. Further, and in the same way as a Platonic dialogue, a novel can present a range of conflicting points of view in a way that encourages assessment and commitment to one or other viewpoint on the part of the reader. This is still not sufficient to defend the cognitive benefits from engaging with different perspectives presented in a literary fictional text. My contention is that *play with perspective* is a standard feature of literary fiction and that such playfulness

encourages the reader to exercise certain pertinent cognitive capacities that relate to the senses of understanding outlined earlier.

Play with perspective

Let us turn to some examples of play with perspective from literary fiction to demonstrate how these literary devices stimulate understanding.

In the case of unreliable narration the reader receives information from an unreliable perspective but is encouraged to recognise that the information provided is unreliable. I see two primary benefits to this: the reader discerns unreliability in a narrative and is encouraged to re-appraise the information provided in light of such discernment. First, the reader is required to recognise when the description is untrue, exaggerated, misjudged or naïve. Further, the process of recognition entails the separation of what is true in the fiction from why the fictional character takes some detail to be true. Here the gain is equally divided between an assessment of the fictional character and an assessment of the material being relayed. For example, the fact that Nellie Deane in *Wuthering Heights* is of a lower social standing gives some credence to the unusual events depicted but also adds to the suspicion that the report might not be entirely factual. The close reader is then committed to reappraise what he or she has read in light of the revelation that what is read may be deliberately or unconsciously skewed. Discerning unreliable narration and reviewing what is accrued in light of unreliable narration are examples of developing understanding in sense (i). The reader's establishing what is true in the fiction may not present anything useful about the world beyond the fiction, but the skills of recognition and review are applicable to extra textual reality (more of which in Chapter Five).

Another case of re-appraisal occurs when there is a dramatic twist at the end of a literary work that forces the reader to reconsider the whole story. At the end of Ian McEwan's *Atonement* the reader is made to review the work as a fiction penned by one of the characters, Cecilia, in a way that casts doubt over whether Cecilia and Robbie lived happily ever after. In this case the reader's initial appraisal is de-stabilised and he or she is encouraged to reconsider and make sense of events in retrospect. In this case the reader is confronted with how one might misunderstand a situation, perhaps through lack of discernment, misapplication or failure to navigate through a complex effectively. Literary fiction creates more opportunities through linking perspective to other literary devices such

as tone, irony and symbolism, rather than basing misunderstanding on failure to spot some vital clue as might be the case in a detective novel.

Play with perspective also helps the reader to build a set of data or a picture of what someone was like. Take, for example, cases where a significant character does not actually appear in a work: Caddy in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* or Captain Flint in Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. The reader is forced to construct a character from the points of view of other characters. In constructing such a portrait the reader needs to attend to detail as well as conflicting reports and agendas, hidden or otherwise, that these various sources harbour. For example, in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* Caddy's story is told by Benjy, Quentin and Jason Compson. The perspectives of these characters flesh out the reader's conception of Caddy and she emerges as the antithesis of the Southern lady: rebellious, elusive and tragic. In telling the tale in this way, Faulkner also shines the spotlight on the different narrators so that the reader gains a sense of their characters in respect of their views of Caddy. There are multiple senses of understanding at work when a reader discerns what is being said about a given character (understanding in sense i), constructs and navigates a complex of the various views (understanding in sense iii) before forming some overall interpretive judgement (understanding in sense v).

As well as constructing a complex, play with perspective can also be used to blur boundaries and identities so that the reader is granted access not to a single point of view but many: from a character at different stages of their life, from the perspective of many characters or from the author's perspective in addition to that of the other characters. Take for example, the final section of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* where the stories of six characters are mingled with the voice of the author. Through this forced comparison the reader is encouraged to entertain rival and conflicting hypotheses, which contribute to our understanding why something occurred or why someone acted in the way they did (understanding in sense ii). One advantage of this free movement of thought about characters' motivations is that the reader can practise navigating a complex of ideas (understanding in sense iii).

Authors frequently invite comparison between perspectives through juxtaposition, often flagging up a worthwhile contrast through parallelism in particular detail. At the start of Act Two and Act Three of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* both Caliban and Ferdinand are depicted carrying a burden of wood for their master Prospero. While Caliban rails against his overlord, eliciting a punishment of magical spells:

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him
By inch-meal a disease! This spirit hear me,
And yet I needs must curse. (II. 2. 1-4)

Ferdinand finds consolation in the thought that his slavery allows him to see his love:

This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, but
The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
And makes my labours pleasures. (III. 1. 4-7)

The ability to spot patterns, perhaps a repeated detail or motif, is a useful navigational tool (understanding in sense iii). In this case the reader has exercised some skill in discerning a relevant comparative point from the text which increases his or her understanding of the characters of Caliban and Ferdinand. During this deliberation, certain tensions may be drawn between perspectives and sized up in the Aristotelian sense of *Sunesis*. As the result of this assessment, the reader is able to reach a judgement concerning vested interests, misjudgement and motivation in the characters before them. Making such a judgement explicit denies the reader the opportunity to practise his or her skills of discernment, application, navigation or interpretation.

Play with perspective helps the reader develop understanding in sense (iv) by encouraging empathy with a character perhaps by developing a detailed back story. The reader gains a feel for the subject of Joyce's short story 'Araby' through, in part at least, the author's use of free indirect discourse. The narrative moves from child's play in the shadows, to a meeting with the girl who lives opposite, to the brooding over his first love that distracts from his school work and culminates in the stark, critical self-awareness in the last lines on his late arrival at the bazaar: 'Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.' In many ways 'vanity', 'anguish' and 'anger' are hyperbolic descriptions of what is going on but this does not matter as the salient feature of the story is the character's coming to a degree of self-awareness of his situation. The cognitive claim is not that the literary fictional description is exactly what experience X is like, it may not be - at least not to you, but rather that engaging with the literary fictional description generates an interpretation that

may be useful to evaluate against really experiencing X (I say more on this in the final chapter).

I have taken as read the fact that one gains more knowledge from more perspectives and have focussed on the fact that literary fiction affords the reader additional cognitive potential from its play with perspective. It is generally play with perspective that encourages the reader to exercise a range of skills comparable to those outlined in section (3.2) above. To finish this section I need to show how the gain from the reader's engagement with perspective is useful to the reader's overall interpretation of a text.

Interpretation and perspective

The following example is illustrative of how material gained from the reader's engagement with perspective can shape the reader's interpretation of a literary fictional text. In the first paragraph of Chapter Seven in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* omniscient narration is used to distinguish between Eleanor Harding's demeanour and what the character is really thinking and feeling: what anyone would observe in 'her look, her tone, every motion and gesture of her body,' from what is going on in 'her heart'. She rides off leaving Bold 'without a look of love or a word of kindness' but we are told by the omniscient narrator: that 'she had a natural repugnance to losing her lover', that 'she was not quite so sure that she was in the right as she pretended' and later that 'she would have really liked to take him by the hand, to have reasoned with him, persuaded him, coaxed him out of his project, to have overcome him...to have redeemed her father'. The omniscient narrator reports Eleanor's thoughts with brevity, subtle qualification and the insight of someone who has studied their subject thoroughly. The perspective presented through omniscient narration grants the reader privileged access to the intentions, concerns and preoccupations of the character and contrasts what is said and done, or not said and done, with what is believed, hoped for and imagined. Omniscient narration does not only supply more information to the reader but encourages the reader to think about the information supplied. In the Trollope example, the information may be used by the reader to form an intermediate hypothesis about the characters involved that is then carried over to subsequent chapters and open to review. Literary fiction may present a readymade interpretation of the events described. In such cases, the reader is not expected to take the interpretation at face value but to question such interpretations further.

4.5 Ambiguity

‘Ambiguity’ refers to a word or phrase which conveys more than one meaning: on being told ‘the pig is cured’ I should ask whether this means made well again or into salami. The straw man portrait, one that requires finessing, is that while philosophers clear up lexical and structural ambiguities, for the sake of clarity, writers of literary fiction create ambiguity as a smokescreen to disguise lack of serious thought:

Logicians and philosophers typically concern themselves with ambiguity either as a defect in the arguments of others or as a hazard from which their own serious discourse is to be protected. Literary critics, alive to the rhetorical values of ambiguous expression, *are not equally sensitive* to the philosophical demands for clarity and system.

(Scheffler 1979: 11 my italics)

There are cases of ambiguity which are also cases of vagueness as when I gesture indeterminately over there and it is not clear whether I am pointing to Bill or Ben. Clearing up this kind of ambiguity is good practice in philosophy as it is in any other field of communication. However, not all cases of ambiguity are the result of vague hand waving. Some ambiguity is carefully contrived and can yield cognitive reward on close analysis. In these cases, an author has taken time to construct ambiguity in order to encourage the reader to think about at least two issues and their relation. William Empson gives the following example of the sixth type of ambiguity (ambiguity by tautology, contradiction or irrelevance) in his seminal work *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930):

CRESSIDA: I have a kinde of selfe recides with you:

But an unkinde selfe, that itselfe will leave

(*Troilus and Cressida* III. 2. 155-156)

It wouldn’t be ‘playing the game’ to find fault with Shakespeare for not specifying whether ‘unkinde’ means ‘devoid of the virtue of kindness’ or ‘not of a certain type’. One assumes the author deliberately chose a word to carry both meanings where each meaning has individual and possibly joint significance. Empson in his famous study of ambiguity interprets this speech from *Troilus and Cressida* as follows:

‘Part of me will always be fixed in you; but I have also an unkind self which does not know what it is about, wants to leave the kind self with you for the moment and get away to be alone’. (Empson 1984: 179 quotation marks in original)

So the answer to the question ‘does Cressida want to be with Troilus?’ is both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ but this is no logical contradiction, rather a description of Cressida’s psychological state.

Eileen John identifies lexical ambiguity as playing a role in helping the reader understand a literary fiction through conceptual inquiry. I quote the following passage in full as it helps us to distinguish the stages a reader progresses in his or her enquiry:

The story [Grace Paley’s ‘Wants’] raises a question about what it means to want something partly by the literary technique of using a word with two standard meanings. When the ex-husband says, out of the blue, that she “didn’t want anything” and will “always want nothing,” the sentences can be read both in terms of wanting as desiring and wanting as lacking. Although it is fairly clear that the ex-husband is thinking of her as desiring nothing, the reader is left to wonder which meaning is most appropriate and, I think, is likely to feel confused about how distinct the two meanings are. We think about *lack* shading into *need*, and *need* shading into *desire*, and perhaps we compare the negative, inert connotation of want-as-lack to the somehow forward-looking connotation of want-as-desire. The relation and tension between the two meanings becomes an underlying question of the story, though it takes on a more concrete focus as we try to understand the narrator and the claim that she *lacks desires*.

(John 1998: 337 italics in original)

First, the reader understands the various meanings of the word or phrase in question in a basic semantic sense. Secondly, the reader is required to discern ambiguity in relevant words or phrases; this corresponds to understanding in sense (i) above. Thirdly, there may be recognition that there is a conventional reading perhaps one that moves the story along and a less obvious but potentially fecund additional reading. John talks about some potential confusion in the reader’s mind as to how any additional reading might fit the text which motivates the reader to develop a better understanding of the relevant themes at a

more abstract level and apply the result of this conceptual engagement (understanding in sense iii) to his or her interpretation of the text (understanding in sense v). I should also note that Paley's short story provides a nice example of how ambiguity can develop understanding in sense (iv). The description of being wanting, in both senses of lacking and needing, must generate a feeling of low self-esteem in the lead female character.

Identifying ambiguity

While some cases of ambiguity stop the reader in their tracks as the meaning of the word, phrase or line is not immediately clear, other cases are not obvious until the readership has its critical ear attuned. Once the reader tunes in to the possibility of ambiguity, examples abound. Examples abound on reading Herbert's 'Affliction I' (see appendix 2) which is cited by Empson as an example of the sixth type of ambiguity in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.³⁸ 'The service brave' (line 2) is most likely to refer to bravery on the worshipper's behalf but the line may also be read as bravery on the part of God in choosing to 'entice' a particular individual. Line 14 on first reading seems to refer to 'joys' as the speaker's fellows but can be read in such a way as to make Christian fellowship the source of joy. The phrase 'I scarce beleev'd' (line 29) is ambiguous as it might refer to the belief that the narrator is still alive or refer to religious conviction. There is a paradox in the ninth stanza where God's motivation is unclear, ambiguously so, in inflicting more hardship when the sufferer benefits from hardship. Further, in the final verse, 'though troublest me' (line 61) at face value refers to physical affliction but also extends to mental preoccupation where the first sense is the cause of the second in a way that expresses the well-known problem of evil. I detect some teasing humour in the ambiguity of lines 63- 64:

Well, I will change the service, and go seek
Some other master out.

Prima facie, some other master sounds like an alternative to God but may also be an alternative to the neophyte type of service described at the start of the poem. The phrase 'clean forgot' in the penultimate line of the poem may mean 'seems to have completely

³⁸ A number of Herbert's poems bear the title 'Affliction', the relevant piece has as its first line: 'When first thou didst entice to thee my heart.'

escaped the mind of God' but 'clean' also means purified and the verb 'forgot' may, perhaps more unusually, be read as the speaker declaring their mind is empty.

In order to discern the viability of this last interpretation of such an ambiguous phrase, the reader needs to explore the theme of purification with reference to the rest of the poem. It may be the case that such a reading is subsequently rejected as not fitting quite so well, the point is that discerning the depth of meaning (understanding in sense i) involves applying the different meanings of words to other aspects of the work, understanding in sense (ii), and working out which common associations of words are most relevant (understanding in sense iii); both carry the potential to feed into an overall reading of a work (understanding in sense v).

Interpretation and ambiguity

As with irony, the skill of identifying ambiguity is only the first step to understanding the literary text better. The reader is also required to work out whether an instance of ambiguity is pertinent to a reading or not. The reader exercises critical judgement in being able to hypothesise over the significance of various ambiguities. For example, ambiguity surrounding joy and fellowship in line 14 may be drawn in contrast to the final sentiment. Whereas at the start of the poem the believer's faith was bound up with delight, nature and fellowship, at the end of the poem it concerns a deeply personal relationship and God is addressed personally with an exclamation in line 65.

Ambiguity works in much the same way as metaphor in that, while new knowledge is not directly provided, the trope encourages comparison between two senses of meaning including pragmatic meaning which enlarges the initial domain of what is known so that the reader's vista is broadened. For example, the ambiguity of 'love' in the last line stimulates conjecture over what might be meant. One answer is that the sentiment expressed is 'my reason for being is to love God'. There are two pieces of textual evidence that point in this direction: first, line 34 introduces the notions of use and usefulness which tie in with the speaker's sense of his or her *raison d'être*. Secondly, the preceding stanza contains the reflection that if the speaker were a tree then he or she would have many distinct and worthwhile purposes. These individual references may be unified through the

Augustinian line from *The Confessions*: ‘Our hearts are restless, until they find rest in Thee’; the speaker’s purpose in life is to seek rest in God. This is an example of a ‘readymade hypothesis’ where a close reading of a literary artwork reminds the reader of a well-known phrase that forms an interpretive hypothesis in the hope that using the phrase will shed some light on what is going on in the work under analysis. Using readymade hypotheses in this way resists the criticism that the literary art merely presents further evidence of what is known already, this was one of Stolnitz’s objections, as the readymade hypothesis is not the result of the reader’s interpretation but a tool that is used by the reader in his or her interpretive enterprise and it is the skill of ‘putting to use’ which I defend as an example of understanding in sense (v).

A readymade hypothesis may be used in the course of a close reading but does not constitute the end result of close reading. The following passage is representative of the kind of literary interpretation I have in mind when I refer to understanding in sense (v) where such an interpretation is not reduced to a one line sound bite. Empson suggests the first ‘love’ is to be read in the future tense while the second ‘love’ is to be read in the present tense. Then over the course of a couple of pages Empson offers his interpretation, here is a sample extract:

‘If I have stopped loving you, let me go; do not make me love you again in the future, so that I shall regret it if I return to the world. Allow me to be consistent, even though it means an entire loss of your favour.’ But one may also distinguish between the love of God which is an arduous effort towards a goal and the love of God which has achieved its goal, which being a mystical illumination has no doubts and is its own reward. Allotting these meanings in the order given we have: ‘Do not let me spend my life trying to love you, loving you in will and deed but not in the calm of which so few are worthy. Do not make me hanker after you if I would be better under some other master elsewhere; even though this would mean you must forget me altogether.’

(Empson 1984: 183-184 quotation marks in original)

This interpretation demonstrates the cognitive potential of ambiguity to contribute to a larger, more considered interpretation of a work of literature.

4.6 Repetition

My thesis, that literary devices play a significant role in the reader gaining understanding from literary fiction may still be met with some incredulity. Given that there are so many kinds of literary device do I really mean that *all* literary devices bear the potential to further a reader's understanding? We have seen that tropes such as metaphor and irony can stimulate understanding in the senses outlined in section (3.2) but this seems an unlikely claim with other literary devices like rhythm, rhyme or alliteration. Such devices are prominent in poetry, present in drama and may be used, though to a lesser degree, in literary prose. My reply is that all literary devices can play a potentially important and often overlooked role in gaining cognitively from reading literary fiction. This section takes rhythm, rhyme and alliteration as some final examples.

Prima facie, there is nothing about rhythm, rhyme or alliteration that precludes cognitive gain. Mnemonics can help us retain information by means of alliteration and rhyme hence we recite 'red sky at night, shepherd's delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning.' The rhythm of recitation can help commit times-tables to memory. Yet neither fits the quinquartite account of understanding advanced above. Rhythm, rhyme and alliteration are all examples of repetition and writers have frequent recourse to repetition to communicate something of significance to the reader. There is a distinction between repetition of content and repetition of form. The most uncomplicated version of repetition of content occurs when a word or phrase is repeated for emphasis like a refrain: 'That moment she was mine, mine, fair' (from Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' line 36). Repetition of the word 'mine' draws our attention to the possessiveness of the male character. In what follows I hope to show that repetition does not just work in terms of content but also in terms of form. I shall argue that while some literary devices based on repetition may be used predominantly for an aesthetic or rhetorical effect, one should not discount them from making a contribution to a reader developing the pertinent senses of understanding from engaging with a literary text.

Rhythm

When we read aloud we recognise the beat of repeated stresses in the stream of sounds and call this rhythm. If the rhythm is repeated in regular form we call this meter. Meter makes up verse and can be used to add fluency to narration. However, a break in the usual rhythm can be used by an author to signify an important detail or conjure an appropriate mood

which helps the reader discern what is communicated in the literary work. The opening caesura from the fourth stanza in Thomas Hardy's 'The Voice' breaks the waltz-like rhythm of the previous verses:

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling.

This break in rhythm calls the reader's attention to the solitary 'I' of the grieving Hardy and contrasts his desolate feeling of loss to the consoling recollections in the first three stanzas. So, in this case, rhythm encourages the reader to draw a comparison between the fourth stanza and the rest of the poem in a way that necessitates the reader navigating the work as a whole (understanding in sense iii).

Rhythm and breaks in rhythm are not the preserve of poetry. Consider the changes in rhythm that occur in the following lines:

Othello: My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife

 O insupportable! O heavy hour!

 Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse

 Of sun and moon, and that th'affrighted globe

 Did yawn at alteration. (Othello V. 2. 100-104)

The first line quoted above suggests a rare moment of recognition on the part of Othello before the self-indulgent and rhetorical 'Othello music' resumes.

In some novels, a change in rhythm may accompany the move from the general to the particular. Take, for instance, the opening chapter of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* which moves from a description of the mining area to dialogue: ' "Can I have my dinner, mother?" he cried, rushing in with his cap on "cause it begins at half-past one, the man says so"'. In literary fiction as in everyday speech, and unlike statements in maths and logic, the tone of how a line is delivered affects its meaning. A nuanced inflexion in how something is put, like a fleeting gesture or facial expression, can make the utterance sincere or insincere, sarcastic or straightforward, shocking or matter of fact. A reader's attention to

how rhythm or rhyme influence tone assists the reader's discerning the meaning of what is said; understanding in sense (i) above.

Repetition can act as evidence that there is something worth pursuing in a text and does so in a distinctive way that appeals to our aesthetic sensibilities. We appreciate repetition, notice its presence and speculate as to why the author of a given literary fiction uses this device. Shakespeare uses stichomythia to break the sycophantic poetry of Goneril's and Regan's speeches to Lear and show that Cordelia's answer breaks with the norm of what was expected:

Cordelia: Nothing, my lord.

Lear: Nothing!

Cordelia: Nothing.

Lear: Nothing will come of nothing.

Speak again. (King Lear I. 1. 86-89)

In this instance, the form of rhythm contributes to the psychological portrait sketched of the relationships between Lear and his daughters which is established so crucially in the opening scene. In addition, the motif of ‘nothing’ is woven through the work and contributes to a general reading of *King Lear*: a portrait of someone who has to be reduced to his most minimal state before he starts perceiving who is just and loyal. This theme is mirrored in the sub plot, so a reader who is looking out for references to nothing will be sensitive to Gloucester’s line: ‘I have no way and therefore want no eyes, I stumbled when I saw’ (*King Lear* IV. 1. 20) and may speculate on the parallel in personality and predicament between Lear and Gloucester; a case of understanding in sense (ii).

Rhythm may also be used to communicate the non-propositional. Here is a chilling example where rhythm may be used by the author to communicate something of the unfeeling and mechanical mind-set of a murderer. The example, as earlier, is taken from Robert Browning's poem 'Porphyria's Lover'. Browning describes the moments prior to Porphyria's murder by her lover and the murderer's thoughts immediately after this curiously passionless crime. The reader may expect a break in rhythm at the point when the crime is committed but the rhythm between lines 39 and 43 is not disturbed which is incongruous given the disturbing nature of the event:

In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain
As a shut bud that holds a bee,

The lines run in the same unbroken rhythm as if the perpetrator's train of thought runs unbroken.

Rhyme

There are many variations on rhyme: sight rhymes repeat the look of a word, half rhymes repeat an approximation of how the word sounds and an internal rhyme repeats the same or similar sound, usually a vowel sound within the same line. In the case of end rhymes the last stressed vowel is repeated. The single-minded determinism of Porphyria's lover is portrayed in the rhyme scheme which has predominantly masculine endings throughout Browning's poem. For instance, the rhyme 'knew, grew, do' over lines 32 to 35 suggest a singular subject and purpose in contrast to the rhyme 'endeavour, disserve and for ever' over lines 22-25 which describes Porphyria's inner turmoil. The poem flows in an unbroken narrative description of the murder where concealed stanzas have an ABABB rhyme scheme which marks an unswerving structure to mirror the perpetrator's fixed and resolute action. The murderer has his actions controlled in the first half of the poem: his arm is placed by Porphyria around her waist and his cheek drawn close to her hair. In a similarly deterministic fashion, the murderous lover's actions are subject to controlling forces in the second half of the poem.

Unlike everyday conversation, when I rarely spend time selecting what I deem to be the right word but think aloud, it is tradition to rewrite a work of literary fiction and to build up layers of complexity and significance. Authors of literary fiction experiment with literary devices. Tennyson talks about changing the rhyme in the opening lines of his poem 'The Lotus-eaters' to create a more soporific effect: "'the strand" was, I think, my first reading, but the no rhyme of "land" and "land" was lazier' (footnote 3 in Tennyson 1987: 468). The final version reads:

'Courage!' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'

In the afternoon they came unto a land

In which it seemed always afternoon.

I would conjecture that the repetition of 'afternoon', the assonance of line 2 and choice of the indefinite article over the definite article in line 3 also contribute to the feeling of laziness in these lines. Understanding the mood of the poem from a close reading of these lines combines discernment of meaning (understanding in sense i) with understanding as experiential knowledge (understanding in sense iv).

Alliteration

Alliteration or 'head rhyme' is repetition of initial, identical speech sounds in a sequence of nearby words which are usually consonants and usually appear in a prominent place, for instance at the start of a sentence. Repetition of form can be used to communicate non-propositional knowledge to the reader. Consider how sibilant alliteration is used by D. H. Lawrence to convey the slithering movement and sound of a snake:

He sipped with his straight mouth,

Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,

Silently. (From 'Snake' by D.H. Lawrence)

Alliteration can manifest in several different patterns where such patterns make connections between themes. Of course alliteration may be used for exclusively aesthetic effect and it may be a matter of trial and error to detect whether alliterative phrases are written in such a way as to reward cognitive gain as well as aesthetic sensibility. A reader might recognise the cognitive potential between lines 23-28 of Browning's poem 'Porphyria's Lover' in the words: passion, pride, prevailing, pain and pale. There is a further alliterative connection later on between the words 'perfection' and 'purity' in line 37. It is significant that all these descriptions relate to Porphyria; a parallel description of her lover's mental states is conspicuous by its absence. The reader may then conjecture what the relation is exactly between these descriptions of Porphyria: that despite her weakness (signified by the alliteration 'pain' and 'pale') she nevertheless experiences a psychomachia where passion in the end prevails over pride and this culminates in love which her murderous lover wants to prevent as he admires Porphyria's stainless innocence. The ability to spot the kind of rhymes that may generate a further point of insight works in the same way: love and prove, breath and death are frequent cases.

Repetition and interpretation

Some instances of repetition flag up elements of interest that may be fed into a broader interpretation of a literary work. There may even be examples where one can construct an interpretation of a literary work around one instance of rhyme, rhythm, or in the example which follows, alliteration. In line 48 of Browning's 'Porphyria's lover' alliteration is not so much used for the purpose of making connections between themes but rather flagging up words that are worth the reader spending some time over in order to formulate a reading or interpretation of the literary work. The line runs:

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss.

'Blush' is a reminder of Porphyria's innocence, now lost. 'Bright' is ironic as what shone has been extinguished. 'Beneath' fits the dominance-subjugated dichotomy running through the poem and 'burning' points ambiguously to both passion and destruction. The resulting interpretive comment on the line feeds into a broader literary interpretation of the poem. In this respect, an analysis of the alliteration yields an interpretive hypothesis so metaphor, irony and ambiguity are not the only literary devices to assist in developing understanding in sense (v).

4.7 Aesthetic Effectiveness

This chapter ends by drawing the reader's attention to two significant implications of sections (4.1-6): the first is that my criticism of literary non-cognitivism as set out in section (2.3) is strengthened and the second is that the examples provided throughout this chapter help to answer a challenge implicit in Martha Nussbaum's *Love's Knowledge*.

In the first case, my argument against literary non-cognitivism runs as follows. The prevalence of literary devices is a standard feature of literary fiction. A reader's aesthetic appreciation of the literary arts includes many factors including admiration of a literary author's facility with language. The literary author's facility with language extends to the author's use of literary devices: making ironic comment, turning a choice metaphor and developing a repeated motif. I argue in this chapter that engaging with literary devices can

increase the reader's cognitive gain in respect of five senses of understanding. Creating literary devices that stimulate the reader's understanding demonstrates a facility with language. Facility with language is admired aesthetically. Let us call the literary author's facility with language, when applied to literary devices that contribute to cognitive gain, 'aesthetic effectiveness'. Admiring aesthetic effectiveness is part of the readership's overall aesthetic appreciation of a literary artwork; to deny this is to draw an arbitrary distinction between something that the reader admires aesthetically which can count in an overall aesthetic judgement and something which cannot count. I defined literary non-cognitivism as the thesis that cognitive gain is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on a reader valuing literary fiction as literary fiction. My case against this view depended on my being able to demonstrate that gaining cognitively from literary fiction affects my aesthetic appreciation of a work and I have argued that this is indeed the case. So, literary non-cognitivism in its separating cognitive gain from literary appreciation gives us an inaccurate account of the phenomenon under discussion.

It might be helpful at this point, by way of a recap, to provide some examples of aesthetic effectiveness:

Irony: it is difficult to invent a sophisticated and cognitively rewarding example of irony cold. A default is to state 'that's clever' when the opposite is meant but this simple kind of irony offers limited cognitive resources. As a consequence not every remark annotated as 'ironic' in the margins of a literary text by the reader is a candidate for the type of cognitive value I seek to defend. It is more plausible that a writer recognises potential for a sophisticated ironic comment in a word or phrase and capitalises on this fact by crafting the ironic statement or episode into something that links with important themes in that play, poem or novel. The reader's close reading is then rewarded when they analyse this contrived irony.

Particularity: take the many cases of names having significance. In the opening scene of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Parson Tringham informs Jack Durbeyfield that he is a descendent of Sir Pagan d'Urberville from Normandy and in so doing raises the reader's awareness of issues concerning lineage, destiny and the rural-urban divide (field versus *ville*). Particular detail contrived in literary fiction is contrived, through the artistry of the author, to yield to the reader's close analysis.

Precision: time and effort is expended over selecting the right word to sum up what the literary artist wants to say. An early draft of the first stanza of 'The Dry Salvages' shows

T.S. Eliot replacing ‘suburbs’ with ‘garden’ before suggesting ‘dooryard’ and ‘backyard’ in parentheses and finally settling on the former. One commentator suggests that he chose the less dull Americanism ‘dooryard’ ‘...to echo Whitman’s famous poem ‘When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom’’ (Gardner 1978: 122-123).

Metaphor: the author’s choice of imagery and the accompanying commonplace associations can reward close attention. If Miller had chosen an item other than a mattress or Shakespeare a bird other than a vulture then the sense of their metaphors would be utterly altered to the detriment of the accompanying cognitive reward from close analysis.

Perspective: I have argued that the benefits of different perspectives through literature is not so much the supply of more information from a perspective but rather how the literary author’s playfulness with perspective stimulates thoughtfulness in the reader. It is a standard feature of literary fiction to have the author play with perspective in an innovative way. For example, the first chapter of *The History of the World in Ten and a Half Chapters* retells the story of Noah’s Ark from the first person perspective of a woodworm.

Ambiguity: as with irony, the author may come across the potential for ambiguity in their writing when one phrase has two relevant meanings that should the reader detect these readings will increase the reader’s understanding of the literary work. The first line of paragraph six in the opening chapter of Jane Austen’s *Emma* runs: ‘The event had every promise of happiness for her friend’. Where the ‘friend’ in question may be Miss Taylor or Mr Weston, conveying the thought that Emma views Mr Weston as merely a potential friend or substitute for Miss Taylor but not a romantic match.

Repetition: a skilful author is able to engineer a subtly conspicuous rhythm, rhyme or alliteration so that the reader, on detecting and interrogating the use of this device, will draw a link to a theme in the work as a whole. This is exemplified in the rhythm of Browning’s poem ‘Porphyria’s Lover’ suggesting determinism.

These cases show the skill of the literary author in his or her crafting literary devices that are indispensable to the literary work of art and in gaining understanding, in the senses outlined above, form the literary art. I chose the opening quotation from Plato (on the title page of this thesis)³⁹ for the primary reason that it focusses on a defence of literature from literary properties and because poetry (poesis) in the ancient world conveys the sense of a text being fashioned into literature. I argue that the skill of the literary author is necessary to craft a work in such a way as to enable literary devices to generate cognitive gain and,

³⁹ The translation is by Desmond Lee: Plato. 1987: *The Republic*. London: Penguin p. 376.

consequently, how the aesthetic and cognitive are not separable as the literary non-cognitivist would have us believe. Instead, the reader's cognitive gain is dependent on the aesthetic effectiveness of the text.

The second implication of my argument relates to a theme in *Love's Knowledge* (1992) where Martha Nussbaum argues that sensitivity to literary expression encourages sensitive moral perception (1992: 148-167). Nussbaum cites a number of literary devices to this end: salient imagery (1992: 151), free indirect discourse, 'nuance and fine detail of tone', specificity of detail (1992: 154), use of chorus (1992: 157), metaphor and perspective (1992: 161-162). In the course of her discussion of James's *The Golden Bowl*, Nussbaum poses the following question: 'How can we hope to confront these characters and their predicament, *if not in these words and sentences*, whose very ellipses and circumnavigations rightly convey the lucidity of their bewilderment, the precision of their indefiniteness?' (Nussbaum 1992: 149 my italics). Nussbaum's challenge, as we might call it, is how to explain the indispensable role that the literariness of literary fiction plays in our gaining cognitively from a text where a non-literary paraphrase does not provide the same cognitive value as its literary counterpart. Nussbaum says:

Furthermore, a paraphrase...even when reasonably accurate, does not ever succeed in displacing the original prose; for it is, not being a high work of literary art, devoid of a richness of feeling and rightness of tone and rhythm that characterize the original...The only way to paraphrase this passage without loss of value would be to write another work of art. (Nussbaum 1992: 154-155)

One critic, generally unsympathetic to Nussbaum's project, is sympathetic to her claim against paraphrase: 'Nussbaum is rightly keen on the closeness, or indissolubility, of form and content in the novel and in the lives with which it deals' (Tanner *BJA* 33, 1993: 298). As it stands, however, Nussbaum's challenge rests on a claim without argument. What is needed is a more substantial defence of the indispensability of literary devices and my account of literary cognitivism is well placed to offer such a defence. I have demonstrated that literary devices perform important work in developing a range of abilities constitutive of our five senses of understanding. The effectiveness of each literary device in generating this cognitive gain is down to the author's skill in selecting the right word, tone or image.

In sum, I have identified a range of specific capacities which may be developed through a close reading of a literary fictional text, where these capacities contribute to the various senses of understanding identified above. My claim is that the skills that contribute

understanding in senses (i-iv) feed into understanding in sense (v). While understanding in these senses require a general competence in reading (following the storyline and the characterisation) these skills are distinguishable from a general competence in reading. There are two main benefits in developing the relevant forms of understanding. First, the reader gains an interpretive hypothesis of a literary work that may be a useful interpretive hypothesis in the world beyond the work. Secondly, readers of literary fiction gain practice in exercising specific skills. I wish to carry both these benefits over to the final chapter where I shall then make the case that the second benefit, that of practising understanding, is more important than the possession of readymade interpretive hypotheses in a reader's conceptual repertoire.

Chapter Five: How Understanding Literary Fiction relates to the World beyond Literary Fiction

Plato objected to drama and poetry as a source of knowledge as both forms of literary fiction can mislead the reader ‘...misrepresenting the nature of gods and heroes, like the portrait painter whose portraits bear no resemblance to their originals’ (*The Republic* 377e). The scenes in Tom Stoppard’s play *Jumpers* that depict George preparing his lecture strike me as an unconvincing representation of the kinds of things philosophy professors say and do.⁴⁰ In the course of this project, I defend literary fiction as a source of cognitive gain on the grounds that literary texts encourage five kinds of understanding resulting from the reader’s close reading and interpretation of a literary work. In this final chapter I shall explore the implications of my argument in relation to Plato’s concern that literary fiction can misrepresent the world. I want to examine the standard model of checking fictional representations against the world in a little more detail before casting some suspicion on this view. I shall end by drawing a contrast between the ‘checking’ model and my alternative cognitivist model.

5.1 The standard account of checking literary fiction against the world

The challenge presented to literary cognitivists rests on the distinction between:

- a) the content of a literary fictional work and
- b) the actual world beyond the literary fictional work.

Literary cognitivists need to say how an understanding of (a) can help develop the reader’s understanding of (b). Two strident claims seem equally wrong.

⁴⁰ In this play A. J. Ayer and G. E. Moore are the ‘gods and heroes’ in question.

The first strident claim is that we do not need to move from (a) to (b) at all and that learning about (a) is sufficient to claim that the reader gains cognitively from literary fiction. For instance, I know that it is true-of-the-fiction that Sherlock Holmes lived in 221b Baker Street. However, to claim that what we learn from literary fiction never needs to apply outside the work swims against the tide of many readers' experiences. Pettersson (2012: 173) cites the Charlton study (2001) which records 57.9% of the readers surveyed saying they read literary fiction in order to learn 'something about other people'. I take it that learning about other people is learning about the actual world beyond the fiction. The fact that details in Conan Doyle's novel are made up, and that no one called Sherlock Holmes appears on the electoral register for 221b Baker Street at that period, does not preclude the work of fiction from depicting the kinds of things people say and think and do. We learn that works of fiction are open to the actual world when we learn how the language game of story-telling from fiction works. Sartre's play *The Flies* tells the fictional story of Orestes and Electra but offers a thinly veiled attack on the Nazi occupation of France.

An equally strident claim is that literary fiction is a source of cognitive gain only if the literary fiction tracks the world accurately. According to this view, we come to knowledge of the world through the indirect means of reading a literary fictional work:

Advocates and opponents of the view that art has cognitive value tend to agree on one point. They agree that, if art is a source of knowledge, it is so in the same way as science is. ...Each of these fundamentally distinct forms of inquiry corresponds to a basic sort of representation.

(Young 2001: 65)⁴¹

Young argues that art and science share the same cognitive value, which rests on representation of some kind, although art and science work in different ways. According to this view, the reader gains from the literary arts if a given work accurately depicts the world beyond the literary work. This second strident claim is my target in this chapter where I want to caution against adopting such a model of checking a representation against the world.

⁴¹ In fairness, Young acknowledges a skills-based model of cognitive gain later in his *Art and Knowledge* (2001: 95) and I only cite this quotation as an example of the second strident claim. Other examples of the second claim include: Gaskin (2013: 285) and Hepola (2014: 79, 85). More moderate claims include: Robinson (2005: 178) and Gaut (2007: 153-154).

The checking model dominates the literary cognitivist debate; in both the literary anti-cognitivist camp (Plato *Republic* 377e and Stolnitz 1992) and in the literary cognitivist camp (Kivy 1997 and Pettersson 2012):

...the institution of fiction, since antiquity, has contained a strong epistemic part in the form of the readers' propensity for thinking about, and attempting to confirm and disconfirm thereby, the live hypotheses that may be proposed to him in the general thematic statements, either explicit or implied.

(Kivy 1997: 129)⁴²

The non-cognitivist authors of *Truth, Fiction and Literature* set out the checking model in their description of the Propositional Theory of literary truth:

...the literary work contains or implies general thematic statements about the world which the reader as part of an appreciation of the work has to assess as true or false. The theory presents two claims. First, a literary work implies propositions which can be construed as general propositions about the world. Second, these propositions are to be construed as involved in true or false claims about the world.

(Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 325 italics in original)

Whether the truth-value of a work counts as part of the reader's aesthetic appreciation need not detain us though, for the record, I think it can for reasons discussed in sections (2.3) and (4.7).

It is worth noting that 'thematic statements' are identified as the relevant subject matter in both quotations cited immediately above. It seems right that we check what the literary fictional work 'is about' in the most general sense rather than checking particular details. We check themes from *The Great Gatsby* about conspicuous consumption, certain male attitudes of possessiveness towards women, individualism and the American Dream rather than whether rich people party in the ways described in the novel. To this end, it does not matter that a fiction is unrealistic or outlandish as we can still check the work's central themes against the world; for example what Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* tells us about hubris and vulnerability.

⁴² Kivy has since distanced himself from this position and I include the quotation as a further example of a philosopher adopting checking or 'confirmation and disconfirmation' as the standard model.

5.2 Concession to the standard account

I do not deny that literary fiction *can* inform the reader about the world and acknowledge that, in cases where an extra literary setting corresponds to a setting described in a literary work, then the reader of the relevant literary fiction is at an advantage in understanding the world. Instances where the reader gains cognitively from checking something from the literary fiction against the world may be separated into two types of case: ‘prospective’ cases when we read a literary work and then find confirmation or disconfirmation and ‘retrospective’ cases when we read a literary work and recognise something from our past experience. In the latter case, reading the literary fiction may make us aware of something of significance that we had previously overlooked.

Consider the following example of a prospective case: I read Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and find the character of Lady Macbeth provides a useful guide to my boss’s character given that she seems impervious to any scruples of conscience and manipulates her conscience pragmatically as she does everything else in order to fulfil her somewhat childish ambitions. Of course, I may be misreading the situation but the potential to be mistaken is not exclusive to reading literary fiction. The cognitive gain from reading literary fiction does not need to be infallible but only reliable enough to count as some epistemic success. So how reliable is ‘reliable enough’? This is a question for exponents of the checking account but there is a parallel problem for my account of cognitive gain based on the various senses of ‘understanding’ outlined above. It seems implausible that reading literary fiction refines understanding, in the senses of discernment, application, cognitive competence, emotional and experiential knowledge and the ability to form an interpretive hypothesis from complex data, where these forms of understanding do not translate to another context beyond the literary fiction. However, further empirical evidence is required to defend the claim that understanding from reading literary fiction translates and I hope this project suggests a direction for future empirical research.

Martha Nussbaum provides an example of retrospective checking in the course of her discussion of the relationship between Maggie and her father in Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl*. Nussbaum says that the reader can learn about this relationship from reading the fictional account and may, in addition, think about how the fictional account relates to ‘the particular history of one’s very own relationship to one’s particular parents’ where ‘...readers become, in Proust’s words the readers of their own selves’ (Nussbaum 1992:

39). The kinds of checking described in prospective and retrospective cases are not contentious - my quarrel is with accepting such a view as the norm. I contend that the checking model is not explanatorily fundamental; which is to say that these kinds of checking do not happen that often, and they are not as important as the senses of understanding outlined above.

5.3 Objections to the standard account

There are at least three reasons why we should be cautious about adopting the checking model as the standard model for cognitive gain from literary fiction.

My first objection to the standard model of checking is that this model encourages a reductive approach to literary fiction which is misguided given the complexity of literary texts. I argued (in section 1.2) that a preponderance of literary devices such as metaphor or symbolism is a standard feature of literary fiction as literature. In corollary, an interpretation of a literary fictional work is generally a lengthy and sophisticated statement and not a paraphrase (see 3.3 and chapter 4 above). Yet the checking model invites telescoped paraphrases of literary fiction like ‘the course of true love never ran smooth’ or ‘too much ambition is self-destructive’. These sound bites may be cited for the sake of brevity but do not do justice to the literary fictional work as a whole.⁴³ As Peter Lamarque says in *The Opacity of Narrative*:

...the trouble with the whole quotation industry – is that propositions are wrenched out of context. If we are looking to make a speech or reflect more deeply on some subject or merely impress with our literary knowledge, we might well appropriate “sayings” from great works...But none of this has much relevance to literary value as such. If literary works are to be valued for their truth, then the truths had better be integrally connected to the works.

(Lamarque 2014: 134)

Admittedly, we may learn from a quotation, the kind found in Victorian anthologies of Shakespeare or an opening citation to a philosophy paper, but this does not equate to the cognitive gain from reading the relevant literary fiction. Some authors of literary fiction pepper epigrams amidst the prose but the practice of extracting such epigrams and taking

⁴³ An example of the kind of paraphrase in question may be found in (Young 2001: 95).

these statements as the cognitive gain in question ignores the widespread practice of close reading outlined above. If we take these sentence summaries to be what the reader is checking then we shall paint a one-dimensional portrait that does not fit the literary phenomenon under investigation just as the adage 'It is better to outmonster the monster than to be quietly devoured' does not tell us much about Nietzsche's moral philosophy.

There are several examples of the tendency towards reduction with characters from literary fiction that have entered popular discourse: Mr. Gradgrind, Don Quixote, Romeo and Scrooge. In such cases the popular use of a character's name only equates in part with the literary fictional representation. In popular usage 'Gradgrindian' refers to an assiduous, materialistic and philistine devotion to hard facts and numbers and in so doing misses the volte face of the character of Dickens's novel as well as his occasional warmth, good intentions and naivety. So the use of 'Gradgrindian' on behalf of the close reader is different from that of someone who has learnt the general meaning of this term without having engaged with the relevant literary fiction. One of Flaubert's literary achievements in creating Madame Bovary was a character who resisted reduction. Of course, an interlocutor may suggest that we check myriad propositions from the text against the world rather than a telescoped paraphrase yet this approach falls foul of two further worries.

A second objection to the dominant model of checking is based on the diversity of extra textual reality which renders checking a trivial activity. Human beings form a motley pageant and display multifarious ways of acting and interacting. In consequence, there must be some state of affairs that will fit whatever the reader seeks to check from the text between here and Addis Ababa. To take the whole interpretation of literary work, in its variety, and to try to find a set of affairs where there is a neat match becomes pointless. The result is a blow to those seeking a neat account of confirmation and disconfirmation of what we understand better from literary fiction.

In place, a philosopher defending the checking model can say that readers of literary fiction are in the same cognitive business as social psychologists in that both groups search for general patterns of human behaviour. Yet literary fiction may depict exceptional cases and still carry cognitive value. This social psychological approach of testing hypotheses for general patterns of behaviour is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on gaining cognitively from literary fiction; a point brought out in our third concern.

A third objection rests on the inadequacy of the checking model to account for readers who expect more from literary fiction than a depiction of a familiar predicament. Consider the

case of Person D, a friend who struggled with paternal responsibilities despite his initial excitement. On one occasion he said ‘there just isn’t anything in literature about this’. The first thing to note about this comment is that ‘literature’ does not refer to the non-fictional body of popular psychology or self-help manuals on this issue; there may well be many such books available. Person D did not mean fictional representation either as he wanted to be made to *think* about the issue rather than *imagine* a further instance of the issue arising. Person D was, of course, already familiar with his own thoughts and feelings and did not need these played back to him in a fictional format but sought to gain some intellectual purchase on what he already knew. He wanted literary fiction to challenge, shed light on and to reconfigure his beliefs about what he was thinking and feeling.⁴⁴ Yet according to the checking model the best Person D can hope for is a restatement of what is already known so that he realises that there are further instances of his predicament in the world. In cases of confirmation no new gain is achieved but rather consolidation. If the reader notices something new in the world beyond the literary work then this gain goes beyond the checking model. I contend that this model of confirmation and disconfirmation presents too limited a picture.

In summary, I do not reject all confirmation and disconfirmation by way of ‘checking’ only its status as the standard account. I accept that checking *may* happen but I am suspicious of the view that this process *often* happens or is especially significant in my gaining a better understanding of the world from reading literary fiction. My contention is that mapping a correspondence between text and reality need not happen at all and that this fact does not compromise the reader gaining cognitively from reading literary fiction. The standard account places too much emphasis on the fictional status of a literary fictional text and is too insistent on establishing a match between the fictional and non-fictional scenario. I want to play down the ‘checking’ model where what is checked is generally something singular (an isolated hypothesis); where the process of checking is a straightforward yet stringent case of verification and where the cognitive gain is taken from the literary work qua description of a fictional state of affairs. In contrast, I propose that no single ‘hypothesis’ needs to be derived from a work but rather that the reader works towards a complex interpretation. I also propose that direct tracking is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on the cognitive gain that I seek to defend but rather that the most significant cognitive gain from literary fiction comes from the readers’ engagement

⁴⁴ This is not a unique case, in his talk ‘Is Death Changing?’ given at Clare College, Cambridge (27/1/11) George Steiner said ‘literature has not responded to heart transplants’. I take him to mean that *literary* fiction has failed to *explore* this issue rather than there have been disappointingly few cases of *depiction*.

with literary devices. I advocate a shift away from checking propositions against the world and towards understanding in the senses outlined in section (3.2) above.

5.4 My thesis as an alternative model

A prominent distinction in my thesis is between literary fiction as fiction and literary fiction as literature. I argue that while the fictional status of literary fiction does no harm to a text's potential for cognitive gain, it does little significant good either and the real work takes place when readers engage with the work as literature. I also argue that the pertinent cognitive gain is understanding in the following five senses:

- i. By 'understanding' the literary cognitivist might mean *discerning* the layers of meaning to be found in a given utterance in a literary fiction, for example that an office in-joke was particularly well used.
- ii. By 'understanding' the literary cognitivist might mean *application* of knowledge accrued from literary fiction to similar cases. I may apply my understanding of why person S is motivated to do such and such to another (fictional or non-fictional) setting.
- iii. By 'understanding' the literary cognitivist might mean knowledge of how to exercise a range of *skills or competences* in reading a literary fiction; for example knowledge of how to chase an allusion or repeated motif in a given text.
- iv. By 'understanding' the literary cognitivist might mean knowledge and articulation of an *experience*; such as being jilted.
- v. By 'understanding' the literary cognitivist might mean forming a coherent *interpretation* or 'reading' of a literary fiction. This entails marshalling the marginalia of a close reading of a text into some coherent order.

The process of close reading develops understanding in senses (i)-(iv) while the reader, through forming an interpretation of a literary text from the material generated from close reading, develops understanding in sense (v). In some cases the sense of understanding stands in binary opposition to a lack of understanding as when you discern a hidden meaning that I miss. At other times the sense of understanding exists in degree as when my interpretation of a given literary work is a little more coherent than yours. We have already

seen this model in action throughout Chapter Four but here is a brief example by way of a reminder.

Consider what the reader understands when he or she reads or hears the following lines:

Caesar's no merchant, to make prize with you

Of things that merchants sold. Therefore be cheer'd;

Make not your thoughts your prisons. No, dear Queen;

For we intend so to dispose you as Yourself shall give us counsel. Feed and sleep.

Antony and Cleopatra V. 2. 181-186

The line 'Make not your thoughts your prisons' enjoys an aphoristic charisma yet runs into the concerns outlined above (5.3). In contrast to the reader who checks this aphorism against the actual world, the ideal close reader notices the plurals in 'thoughts' and 'prisons' and concludes that the metaphor is not saying that we are imprisoned by our thinking but that some thoughts can act as prisons through imposing boundaries and in punishing the thinker. The close reader also notes the irony of Caesar addressing this comment to Cleopatra when she is his prisoner. There is further irony in this comment given the transactional way that Cleopatra treats Caesar's servant in Act Two Scene Five when she rewards his good news with her jewellery. There is ambiguity in the word 'prize' which may refer either to Cleopatra's chattels or to Cleopatra herself. The reader is invited to decide whether this is how Antony views Cleopatra and whether this is how Cleopatra views Antony? Reference to prizes occurs elsewhere in the play, for example when Octavia is referred to as a 'blessed lottery' (II. 2. 254) and encourages the reader or listener to juxtapose the characters of Cleopatra and Octavia. The tone of Caesar's promise enjoys the assonance of a lullaby '...be cheer'd', 'dear Queen', 'feed and sleep' and invites us to ask whether Caesar's promise is genuine given his consistently expedient pragmatism and arch manipulation.

The cognitive gain I wish to defend is based on the reader's careful engagement with the literary text. Any checking against the world is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition on the reader benefiting from this cognitive reward. By my lights, the reader approaches the world beyond the text well practiced in discerning meaning, comparing ideas, following allusions, gauging tone and forming a judgement of an event. My thesis runs contrary to the standard model of confirmation and disconfirmation in two important respects. First, my model focusses on cognitive capacities that fall under five senses of

understanding rather than propositional knowledge as the gain at stake. On my view, the cognitive gain has already taken place once the reader has analysed a given work and constructed his or her interpretation. In fact the cognitive gain that I defend may take place without the reader directly seeking this result in his or her reading. The ideal reader then approaches the world beyond the work in possession of various things: a keener ear for nuance and eye for detail and enhanced skills of conceptual navigation. Confirmation and disconfirmation may occur on occasion but do not constitute the main way in which we understand the world from our understanding of a literary fictional work.

Secondly, my model puts emphasis on the work as literature and not as fiction. One advantage of my account is that it escapes any accusation that the fictional status of the source of cognitive gain detracts from the gain. My alternative model suggests that the reader understands better how to apply useful practices given a sufficiently rich, literary text. These practices, exercised through close reading or practical criticism, may be further exercised on other fictional or non-fictional texts and, further still, in the world beyond the text.

Of course, a literary text may distort what happens in the world on occasion but, as Elgin points out, distortion may constitute a literary device that yields some cognitive reward:

In everyday life we do not encounter the simple goodness of Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*, or the unadulterated evil of Iago in *Othello*, or the blind obsession of Ahab in *Moby-Dick*. But by devising a suitable context, the authors can investigate the characters and their impacts on others in a way that reflects back on reality, perhaps enabling us to recognize the less pure cases we are apt to encounter in fact. Nor is the plot the only refractive lens.

(Elgin 2002: 9)

My understanding a literary fictional work and my understanding the world beyond the literary fiction enjoys a more complex relation than is depicted in standard models of checking. I concede that there may be instances when a literary fiction mirrors events in the world which means that a close and penetrating engagement with the literary fictional work puts the reader in a more insightful position when examining the non-literary fictional case. However, my argument is that the skills developed from close reading and the forming of a coherent interpretation of a close reading puts the reader at a more general advantage in an extra literary setting.

5.5 Truth-tracking v truth-trailing relations

I want to avoid the claim that a close reader's interpretation of literary fiction has nothing to do with what is true in the world and at the same time avoid the claim that it has everything to do with what is true in the world. In what follows, the predicate 'true' refers to the world beyond the literary work rather than to the literary work itself. I use the predicate 'true' to mean correct or actual as when I point out that there are four glasses on the table, direct you to the nearest shops or state my date of birth.⁴⁵ Talk of 'true' in this platitudinous sense does not commit me to any theoretical account of truth. In this final section I am interested in locating my analysis of reading literary fiction into a general schema of finding out whether something is true in the actual world. The above account equates four of the five senses of 'understanding' with some form of knowledge. If knowledge stands in some relation to what is true, as it is widely held to do although the exact relation will depend on the kind of knowledge at stake, and if the four senses of 'understanding' equate to types of knowledge then the four senses of 'understanding' stand in some relation to what is true. There is a fifth sense of understanding identified above that does not equate to any form of knowledge, I term this 'understanding as interpretation', and want to say that this sense of understanding stands in some relation to what is true as well.

On occasion, we are provided with true statements, that 'copper burns with a forest green flame', and such statements are called 'truth-tracking propositions' (Morton 2003: 94-95). A truth-tracking relation is a property of a proposition. A statement is truth-tracking if it provides an accurate description of the world beyond the statement. There is nothing that precludes truth-tracking statements from appearing as part of a literary fiction and consequently for a reader of that fiction to gain an understanding of the world from this information. However, being supplied with true statements in this way is not the interesting thing about gaining cognitively from reading literary fiction.

There are further, more roundabout ways of getting at true judgements that deserve at least acknowledgement by way of a separate descriptive term; I suggest 'truth-trailing'. A 'truth-trailing' relation is a property of either a proposition or, more usually, any practice that advances the establishment of truth. Propositions or practices are truth-trailing if they contribute to the wider enterprise of finding out what is true. Synonyms for 'truth-trailing'

⁴⁵ The 'set of platitudes' supplied by Crispin Wright captures what I have in mind (Wright 1992: 34).

may be ‘truth-finding’ or ‘truth-seeking’.⁴⁶ Truth-trailing relations are still constrained by how the world is.

Some false propositions may get us closer to what is true. Catherine Elgin gives the example of a child’s belief that ‘human beings descended from apes’ which though not true, as apes and humans have a shared ancestor, nevertheless is cognitively better than the belief that ‘humans did not evolve at all’ or ‘human beings evolved from butterflies’ (Elgin 2009: 7-8). Another example is our entertaining the central claim in Copernicus’s theory of planetary motion which though false ‘constitutes a major advance in understanding over the Ptolemaic theory it replaced’ (Elgin 2009: 8). The interest here is how ‘truth-trailing’ applies to practices or activities.

Of course, not all activities are truth-trailing; for example my enjoying a roller coaster ride. Of those practices that are truth-trailing, some result directly in truths about the world, that is to say that an individual is able to make true judgements about the world as a result of these truth-trailing practices. My being able to exercise a database to find out the ages, qualifications and course choices of students under my care is an example of a direct truth-trailing practice. I do something that, fairly immediately, results in my possessing propositional knowledge that is true. In other cases, truth-trailing practices may contribute indirectly to our finding out what is true; as when we learn by our mistakes. I believe that reading literary fiction stands in an indirect relation to what is true and so we should look at these cases a little longer. Elgin provides some nice examples of what, in my terminology, constitutes indirect truth-trailing practices: thought experiments in science and philosophy (Elgin 1993: 24), the ability to form the right question (Elgin 2002: 11) and the dislodgement of unfounded claims in a way that provokes reassessment (Elgin 2007: 52). According to Elgin, literary fiction is well qualified to supply any and all of these indirect truth-trailing practices.

However, Elgin has fiction in mind when she defends the cognitive potential of literary fiction: ‘I suggest that literary fictions are extended, elaborate thought experiments...Like an experiment, a work of fiction selects and isolates, manipulating circumstances so that particular properties, patterns, and connections, as well as disparities and irregularities are

⁴⁶ A parallel exists between truth-trailing activities and what Karen Jones refers to as ‘reason responding’ in her philosophy of action. Jones identifies the benefits of reason responding as having a greater degree of reflectiveness, flexibility and sensitivity than reason tracking (Jones 2003: 189-190).

brought to the fore' (Elgin 2007: 48, 49). Fiction, like a thought experiment in science, philosophy or everyday life, can advance the reader on his or her way to cognitive success without supplying a true judgement about the world directly; hence reading fiction can be an indirect truth-trailing practice. I acknowledge Elgin's analysis of the cognitive gain from fiction but hope to add a broader conception of understanding (in contrast to Elgin 2009:1-2) and seek to play down the importance of testing fictions against the world (in contrast to Elgin 2007: 53) while, in light of my thesis above, play up the importance of a reader's developing understanding from his or her engagement with literary devices.

My thesis is that reading literary fiction closely, and forming an interpretation of a literary fictional work as a result of close reading constitutes a cognitive advance and one that may be classed as an indirect truth-trailing practice, as the reader can use these skills to find out what is true in the world; though not through the same means as entertaining a fiction. The value of reading literary fiction closely is spelt out above in terms of discernment, seeing the bigger picture, applying one's conclusion to other cases, navigation and the development of emotional or experiential knowledge which in turn feed into a reader's interpretation of a work. The joint process of close analysis and forming an interpretation of a work is transferrable to our learning about the world beyond the literary fiction and in this sense indirectly trails what is true in the world beyond the literary fiction. I admit that one may gain a better understanding of the world from reading truth-tracking material in literary fiction. However, the more important practice to the cognitive gain defended here is *how* I read literary fiction. This way of reading literary fiction may be practised on texts that do not seem, on first acquaintance, to be relevant today.

Take the earlier extract above from *Antony and Cleopatra* (V. 2. 181-186). When the close reader analyses a passage from literary fiction, the reader notices: significant detail, is able to rule out a misreading, juxtaposes characters and events, is sensitive to the tone of the character that is speaking, recognises a repeated motif (of 'prizes' in this instance), detects irony and ambiguity. While we may not usually view sensitivity in terms of exercising a practice skilfully, there are cases where we can talk about 'sensitivity to tone' or 'sensitivity to nuance' as a skilful practice leading to better understanding. In becoming well practiced in these 'arts' of reading literature, the reader becomes better skilled in an extra-textual setting where he or she is able to notice details, interpret the significance of details, draw comparisons and detect tone, irony and ambiguity in what is said or done. These practices may yield propositions that track the world but the practices themselves

are truth-trailing and are indirectly truth-trailing as they are gained from reading a literary fictional work.

In sum, reading literary fiction helps readers to exercise certain truth-trailing practices that yield understanding that can be applied to the world beyond the literary fictional work to cognitive benefit. These practices bridge the gap between the literary fictional text and extra textual reality more consistently than our checking propositional knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

This project began with a distinction between the standard features of fiction and the standard features of literature. I argued that literary fiction shares the standard features of both literature and fiction and that the standard features of literature present a plausible but under-explored candidate for cognitive gain. I drew attention to the presence of literary devices in the wealth of philosophical literature on cognitivism. I showed that anti-cognitivist arguments against the role of literary devices in the reader's cognitive gain were of a questioning rather than persuasive nature and that the view that cognitive gain is irrelevant to valuing literary fiction has too much wrong with it to merit allegiance. Next, I argued that the term 'understanding' has a plurality of meanings, but that the most likely senses in the context of any gain from reading literary fiction is discernment, explanation, navigation, articulation of experience and interpretation. I argued that a common sense psychological component to interpersonal understanding carries a significant cognitive reward independent of any scientific psychological component. I then concentrated on the nature of the cognitive reward from reading literary fiction and distinguished between the close reading and interpretation of a text. These processes of close reading and interpretation apply to literary fiction as literature and not as fiction. I countered two potential objections: that gaining a cognitive reward from reading is for an elite literati and that reading literary fiction is 'merely subjective'. In order to substantiate my claim, I spent some time showing how various literary devices can help develop the five senses of understanding specified. I ended by arguing that it is the reader's development of these five senses of understanding that help him or her to develop a better understanding of the world; in contrast to propositional knowledge that is checked against the world.

Have I done enough to answer the anti-cognitivist sceptics?

In section (2.2) literary anti-cognitivism was characterised by the following four concerns and I shall end by a brief summary statement of how I see my version of literary cognitivism meeting these concerns.

1. What has the skill of writing in a manner standard to literary fiction got to do with understanding something better?

The skill of the author, termed aesthetic effectiveness above (section 4.7), is crucial to the cognitive gain that I defend in this project. The reader gains a better understanding through engaging with the results of the author's playfulness with perspective, clever use of metaphor and apt choice of words, to cite just three examples. I have given specific case studies in Chapter Four of how individual literary devices can stimulate understanding in senses (i-v).

2. How does the status of a literary fictional text as literature help with our understanding of the world outside the text?

Throughout the course of this project, I acknowledge but play down the popular picture of gaining propositional knowledge that one checks directly against the world. Instead, my answer is that the skills gained as a result of the close reading and interpretation of literary fiction are superior to any skills gained when reading non-literary fiction, or non-fictional literature where literary devices are present but used sparingly. It is these skills of reading closely and forming an interpretation, which prove useful in understanding the world beyond the text.

3. If literary fiction enhances understanding then why hasn't literary fiction exerted more influence beyond the study of literature?

These other disciplines are theoretical, but as I argue in section (3.1), the domain of literary fiction is part of common sense psychology. As a result, the third challenge is ill-conceived and should run: why isn't literary fiction better recognised as a source of cognitive gain? Pettersson (2012) provides some empirical evidence that such gain is recognised although further empirical work needs to be carried out in this area. I hope this project's emphasis

on the skills of close reading and forming an interpretation shows what future research should examine.

4. How are readers of literary fiction any better at understanding people, if at all, than those who do not read literary fictional works?

This sounds like an empirical question but in light of what I have said it is not clear that any of the current empirical studies come close to testing what is at stake. One is looking for the reader exercising a range of skills gained from a close reading and interpretation of literary fiction and exercised in the world where this whole process may be exercised over a considerable period of time. My thesis is compatible with empirical research and I suggest two words of constructive comment. First, in the spirit of social anthropological fieldwork, we should observe and record the beliefs and practices of actual reading groups. Secondly, there is a wealth of literary criticism available and reader's engagement with this material is worth investigation. It is down to another project to identify the brain activity that corresponds to the five senses of understanding and to test whether this brain activity is stimulated when we read.

This project defends reading literary fiction as a potential source of cognitive gain. If I am right then the mass of literary fiction at our disposal, penned over thousands of years across diverse cultures, provides a great cognitive resource which we pay a disservice to if we don't take it seriously. I hope what I argue here provides at least another excuse for us to read some literary fiction.

Appendix 1. it may not always be so; and i say

it may not always be so; and i say
that if your lips, which i have loved, should touch
another's, and your dear strong fingers clutch
his heart, as mine in time not far away;
if on another's face your sweet hair lay
in such silence as i know, or such
great writhing words as, uttering overmuch,
stand helplessly before the spirit at bay;

if this should be, i say if this should be -
you of my heart, send me a little word;
that i may go unto him, and take his hands,
saying, Accept all happiness from me.
Then shall i turn my face, and hear one bird
sing terribly afar in the lost lands.

e.e. cummings

Appendix 2. The Affliction (I)

When first thou didst entice to thee my heart,
I thought the service brave:
So many joys I writ down for my part,
Besides what I might have
Out of my stock of naturall delights, 5
Augmented with thy gracious benefits.

I looked on thy furniture so fine,
And made it fine to me:
Thy glorious household-stuffe did me entwine,
And 'tice me unto thee. 10
Such starres I counted mine: both heav'n and earth
Paid me my wages in a world of mirth.

What pleasures could I want, whose King I served,
Where joyes my fellows were.
Thus argu'd into hopes, my thoughts reserved 15
No place for grief or fear.
Therefore my sudden soul caught at the place,
And made her youth and fiercenesse seek thy face.

At first thou gav'st me milk and sweetnesses;
I had my wish and way: 20
My dayes were straw'd with flow'rs and happinesse;
There was no moneth but May.
But with my yeares sorrow did twist and grow,
And made a partie unawares for wo.

My flesh began unto my soul in pain, 25
Sicknesses cleave my bones;
Consuming agues dwell in ev'ry vein,
And tune my breath to grones.
Sorrow was all my soul; I scarce beleaved,

Till grief did tell me roundly, that I lived. 30

When I got health, thou took'st away my life,
And more; for my friends die:
My mirth and edge was lost; a blunted knife
Was of more use than I.
Thus thinne and lean without a fence or friend, 35
I was blown through with ev'ry storm and winde.

Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
The way that takes the town;
Thou didst betray me to a lingring book,
And wrap me in a gown. 40
I was entangled in the world of strife,
Before I had the power to change my life.

Yet, for I threatned oft the siege to raise,
Not simpring all mine age,
Thou often didst with Academick praise 45
Melt and dissolve my rage.
I took thy sweetned pill, till I came neare;
I could not go away, nor persevere.

Yet lest perchance I should too happie be
In my unhappinesse, 50
Turning my purge to food, thou throwest me
Into more sicknesses.
Thus doth thy power crosse-bias me, not making
Thine own gift good, yet me from my wayes taking.

Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me 55
None of my books will show.
I reade, and sigh, and wish I were a tree;
For sure then I should grow
To fruit or shade: at least some bird would trust

Her household to me, and I should be just.

60

Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;

In weaknesse must be stout.

Well, I will change the service, and go seek

Some other master out.

Ah my deare God! though I am clean forgot,

65

Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

George Herbert

Bibliography

- Abrams, M. H. 1993: *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. London: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Aristotle, 2013: *Poetics*. Trans. Kenny, A. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Aristotle, 1976: *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Thomson, J. A. K. London: Penguin.
- Aristotle, 1999: *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Irwin, T. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- Aristotle, 2000: *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Crisp, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Aristotle, 2002: *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Rowe, C. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Attridge, D. 2004: *The Singularity of Literature*. London: Routledge.
- Austen, J. 2014: *Emma*. London: Vintage.
- Austin, J.L. 1962: *Sense and Sensibilia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Averill, J. R. 1983: 'Studies on anger and aggression'. *American Psychologist*, 38, pp. 1145-60.
- Bailey, C. 1984: *Beyond the Past and Present: A Theory of Liberal Education*. London: Routledge.
- Beardsley, M. 1978: 'Metaphorical sense'. *Noûs*, Vol. 12, pp. 3-16.
- Beardsley, M. 1982: *The Aesthetic Point of View*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Beardsmore, R. 1971: *Art and Morality*. London: Macmillan.
- Beardsmore, R. 1973: 'Learning from a Novel'. In Vesey, G. (ed.), *Philosophy and the Arts: Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*, Vol. VI. London: Macmillan.
- Bettelheim, B. 1975: *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Thames and Hudson.

- Black, M. 1962: *Models and Metaphors: studies in language and philosophy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bloom, A. 1993: *Love and Friendship*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- Bloom, H. 1999: *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Bonnett, M. 1994: *Children's Thinking*. London: Cassell.
- Bronowski, J. 1978: *The Visionary Eye: Essays in the Arts, Literature, and Science*. London: MIT Press.
- Brown, J. 2011: 'Thought Experiments, Intuitions, and Philosophical Evidence'. In *Dialectica*, Vol. 65(4), pp. 493-516.
- Budd, M. 1989: *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Calvino, I. 1987: *The Literature Machine*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- Camp, E. 2008: 'Showing, Telling And Seeing'. In *The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication*. Vol. 3, pp. 1-25.
- Camp, E. 2009: 'Two Varieties of Literary Imagination: Metaphor, Fiction, and Thought Experiments.' In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 107-130.
- Carey, J. 2005: *What Good Are the Arts?*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Carroll, N. 2003: 'Humour' in Levinson, J. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 345-365.
- Carroll, N. 2007: 'Literary realism, recognition, and the communication of knowledge'. In Gibson, J. Huemer, W. & Pocci, L. (eds.) *A Sense of the World*. London: Routledge, pp. 24-42.
- Carroll, N. 2010: 'On Some Affective Relations between Audiences and the Characters in Popular Fiction' in *Art in Three Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 329-352.
- Cavell, S. 1969: *Must We Mean What We Say?*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cavell, S. 1979: *The Claim of Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Cavell, S. 1987, 2003: *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chappell, T. 2014: *Knowing what to do*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chalmers, D. 1996: *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chatman, S. 1990: *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Churchland, P. 1981: 'Eliminative Materialism and Propositional attitudes'. *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 78, pp. 67-90.
- Coady, C. A. J. 1992: *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cobley, P. 2001: *Narrative*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, T. 2010: 'At play in the fields of metaphor' in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature* Hagberg, G. L. & Jost, W. (eds.) Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 507-520.
- Cohn, D. 1999: *The Distinction of Fiction*. London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Conan Doyle, A. 1986: *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. San Francisco: North Point Press.
- Cooper, D. E. 1986: *Metaphor*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cooper, N. 1994: 'Understanding'. *The Aristotelian Society: supplementary volume*, LXVIII, pp.1-26.
- Cox, C. B. & Dyson, A. E. 1965: *The Practical Criticism of Poetry*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Crapanzano, V. 1986: 'Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description'. In *Writing Culture* Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. eds. London: University of California Press, pp. 51-76.
- Crisp, R. & Slote, M. 1998: *Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Croft, S. & Cross, H. 2000: *Literature, Criticism, and Style*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cronin Weisfeld, C. & Stack, M. A. 2002: 'When I Look Into Your Eyes'. In *Psychology, Evolution & Gender*, Vol. 4 (2), pp.125-147.

- Culler, J. 2000: *Literary Theory: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- cummings, e. e. 1954: *100 Selected Poems*. New York: Grove Press.
- Currie, G. & Ravenscroft, I. 2002: *Recreative Minds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Currie, G. 1990: *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, G. 1995a: 'The Moral Psychology of Fiction'. In *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 73, pp. 250-259.
- Currie, G. 1995b: 'Imagination and Simulation: Aesthetics Meets Cognitive Science.' In Davies, M. and Stone, T. eds. *Mental Simulation*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 151-169.
- Currie, G. 1998: 'Realism of Character and the Value of Fiction'. In Levinson, J (ed.) *Aesthetics and Ethics*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Currie, G. 2010: *Narratives and Narrators*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Currie, G. 2013: 'Does Great Literature Make Us Better?'
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/01/does-great-literature-make-us-better/#n>
- Currie, G. 2014: 'Creativity and the Insight That Literature Brings'. In Paul, E. S. & Kaufman, S. B. eds. *The Philosophy of Creativity: New Essays*. Oxford: OUP, pp. 39-61.
- Currie, G. 2016: 'Does fiction make us less empathetic?' pre-publication version to appear in *Teorema*.
- Damasio, A. R. (1994) *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. New York: Putnam Publishing.
- Dancy, J. 1985: *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Davidson, D. 2001a: *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Davidson, D. 2001b: *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Davies, D. 1996: 'Fictional Truth and Fictional Authors'. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, pp. 43-55.
- Davies, D. 2001: 'Fiction'. In Gaut, B. & McIver Lopes, D. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. London: Routledge, pp. 263-274.

- Davies, D. 2007: *Aesthetics and Literature*. London: Continuum.
- Davies, M. & Stone, T. (eds.) 1995: *Folk Psychology: The Theory of Mind Debate*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Davies, M. & Stone, T. (eds.) 1995: *Mental Simulation*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dennett, D. C. 1995: *Consciousness Explained*. London: Penguin.
- Descartes, R. 1968: *Discourse on Method and Meditations*. London: Penguin.
- Diamond, C. 1991: *The Realistic Spirit*. London: The MIT Press, pp. 367-381.
- Diamond, C. 1996: 'Wittgenstein, mathematics, and ethics: Resisting the attractions of realism'. In Sluga, H. & Stern, D. G. (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 226-260.
- Dickens, C. 1989: *Hard Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diffey, T. 1997: 'What Can We Learn From Art?'. In Davies, S (ed.) *Art and Its Message: Meaning, Morality and Society*. University Park, Penna: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Eagleton, T. 2008: *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Eagleton, T. 2013: *How to Read Literature*. London: Yale University Press.
- Elgin, C 1993: 'Understanding: Art and Science.' *Synthese*, 95, pp. 13-28.
- Elgin, C. 1996: *Considered Judgment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Elgin, C. 2000: 'Interpretation and Understanding'. *Erkenntnis*, Vol. 52, pp. 175-183.
- Elgin, C. 2002: 'Art in the Advancement of Understanding'. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, no.1, pp. 1-12.
- Elgin, C. 2004: 'True Enough'. *Philosophical Issues*, Vol. 14, pp. 113-31.
- Elgin, C. 2007: 'The laboratory of the mind'. In Gibson, J, Huemer, W. & Pocci, L. (eds.) *A Sense of the World*. London: Routledge, pp. 43-54.
- Elgin, C. 2008: 'Emotion and Understanding'. In Brun, G. Doğuoğlu, U. and Kuenzle, D. (eds.) *Epistemology and Emotions*. Farnham: Ashgate.

- Elgin, C. 2009: 'Is Understanding Factive?' In Pritchard, D. Miller, A. and Hadock, A. eds. *Epistemic Value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eliot, T. S. 1963: *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Empson, W. 1984: *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Feagin, S. L. 1988: 'Imagining Emotions and Appreciating Fiction' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 485-500.
- Ferguson, N. ed. 2011: *Virtual History*. London: Penguin.
- Fodor, J. 1987: *Psychosemantics*. London: MIT Press. Chapter 1.
- Fogel, R. W. 1964: *Railroads and American Economic Growth*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.
- Fogel, R. W. & Engerman, S. L. 1974: *Time on the Cross*. London: Wildwood House.
- Forster, E.M. 1927, 1990: *Aspects of the Novel*. London, Penguin.
- Forster, E. M. 1908, 1990: *A Room with a View*. London: Penguin.
- Foster Wallace, David. 1996: *Infinite Jest*. New York: Little, Brown & Co.
- Franklin, R.L. 1981: 'Knowledge, Belief and Understanding'. *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, pp. 193-208.
- Freeland, C. 1997: 'Art and Moral Knowledge'. *Philosophical Topics* Vol. 25, No. 1, Spring pp. 11-36.
- Fricker, E. 2004: 'Testimony: Knowing through Being Told'. In Niiiniluoto, I. Sintonen, M and Woleński, J (eds.) *Handbook of Epistemology*. London: Kluwer academic Publishers, pp. 109-130.
- Friend, S. 2008: 'Imagining Fact and Fiction' in Stock, K. & Thomson Jones, K. (eds.) *New Waves in Aesthetics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 150-169.
- Friend, S. 2012: 'Fiction as a Genre'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. cxii, pt. 2, pp. 179-209.
- Frye, N. 1964: *The Educated Imagination*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Furbank, P. N. 1967: 'Do we need the terms "image" and "imagery"?' in *The Critical Quarterly* Vol. 9, pp. 335-345.
- Gadamer, H.G. 1975: *Truth and Method*. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Gardiner, P. 1983: 'Professor Nussbaum on *The Golden Bowl*'. *New Literary History* Vol. XV, pp. 179-184.
- Gardner, H. 1978: *The Composition of Four Quartets*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Gaskin, R. 2013: *Language, Truth, and Literature: a defence of literary humanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gaut, B. 2007: *Art, Emotions and Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gaut, B. 2010: 'The Philosophy of Creativity' *Philosophy Compass* 5/12, pp. 1034-1046.
- Gaut, B. 2003: 'Art and knowledge'. In Levinson, J. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: University Press.
- Gaut, B. 2000: "'Art" as a Cluster Concept' in Carroll, N. ed. *Theories of Art Today*. London: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 25-44.
- Geertz, C. 1973, 1993: *The Interpretation of Cultures*. London: Fontana Press.
- Gendler, T. 1998: 'Galileo and the Indispensability of Scientific Thought Experiment'. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* Vol. 49, pp. 397-424.
- Gendler, T. 2010: *Intuition, Imagination, and Philosophical Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibson, J. 2007: *Fiction and the Weave of Life*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Gibson, J. 2009: 'Literature and Knowledge'. In Eldridge, R (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: OUP.
- Gibson, J. Huemer, W. & Pocchi, L. (eds.) 2007: *A Sense of the world: Essays on fiction, narrative and knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Gibson, J. 2011: 'Thick Narratives'. In Carroll, N. & Gibson, J. (eds.) *Narrative, Emotion and Insight*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 69-91.
- Goldie, P. 2011: 'Book review of Currie, G. *Narratives and Narrators*'. In *British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 51, no.3, pp. 335-343.

- Goldie, P. 2012: *The Mess Inside*. Oxford: OUP.
- Goodman, N. 1976: *Language of Art*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Graham, G. 1997, 2005: *Philosophy of the Arts*. London: Routledge.
- Grant, J. 2013: *The Critical Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grimm, S. 2006: 'Is Understanding a species of knowledge?'. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, Vol.57, no.1, pp. 515-535.
- Grimm, S. 2011: 'Understanding' in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* Bernecker, S. & Pritchard, D. (eds.) London: Routledge, pp. 84-94.
- Grimm, S. 2012: 'The Value of Understanding'. *Philosophy Compass*, Vol.7, issue 2, pp.103-117.
- Haddock, A. Millar, A. & Pritchard, D. 2009: *Epistemic Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hagberg, G.L. & Jost, W. 2010: *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Harrison, B. 2015: *What Is Fiction For?* Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Havelock, E.A. 1963: *Preface to Plato*. Oxford: Oxford. Chapters 1, 3 & 13.
- Heal, J. 1986: 'Replication and functionalism' in Butterfield, J. (ed.), *Language, Mind, and Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 135-150.
- Heal, J. 1995: 'How to Think About Thinking' in Davies, M. and Stone, T. (eds.) *Mental Simulation*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 33-52.
- Heal, J. 1998: 'Understanding Other Minds from the Inside' in A. O'Hear (ed.) *Current Issues in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 83-99.
- Heal, J. 2003: *Mind, Reason and Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hepola, A. J. 2014: 'The Reality of Fictional Characters and the Cognitive Value of Literature: Some Surprising Insights from Philosophy'. In *Expositions* Vol. 8.2, pp. 79-89.
- Herbert, G. 2007: *The English Poems of George Herbert*. ed. Wilcox, H. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 162-163.

- Hernandi, P. (ed.) 1978: *What is Literature?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hesiod Trans. Most, G. W. 2006: *Theogony*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Hewig, J. et al. 2008: 'Gender Differences for Specific Body Regions When Looking at Men and Women'. In *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour*, Vol 32, pp. 67-78.
- Hills, A. 2010: *The Beloved Self: morality and the Challenge from Egoism*. Oxford: OUP.
- Hill, G. 1999. Interview with Carl Phillips for *the Paris Review*, Issue 154, Spring 2000, transcript found at [http://www the parisreview.org/interviews/730/the-art-of-poetry-no-80-geoffrey-hill](http://www.the-parisreview.org/interviews/730/the-art-of-poetry-no-80-geoffrey-hill)
- Hill, G. 2008: 'The Lords of Limits'. In Haynes, K. ed. *Collected Critical Writings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hogan, P.C. 2000: *Philosophical Approaches to the Study of Literature*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
- Hollis, M. 1995: 'The shape of a life' in Altham, J. and Harrison, R. eds. *World, Mind, And Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 170-184.
- Horgan, T. & Woodward, J. 1985: 'Folk Psychology is Here to Stay'. *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XCIV, no.2, pp. 197-226.
- Hospers, J. 1968: 'Implied Truths in Literature'. In Coleman, F.J. (ed.) *Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics*. London: McGraw- Hill.
- Howell, R. 1979: 'Fictional Objects: How They are and How They Aren't'. In Gustafson, D.F. and Tapscott, B. L. (eds.) *Body, Mind and Method*, pp. 241-294, Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Hursthouse, R. 2006: 'Practical Wisdom: A Mundane Account'. In *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, pp. 283-307.
- John, E. & McIver Lopes, D. (eds.) 2004: *Philosophy of Literature: Contemporary and Classic Readings, An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- John, E. 2003: 'Literary fiction and the Philosophical Value of Detail'. In Kieran, M. & Lopes, D. (eds.) *Imagination, Philosophy and the Arts*. London: Routledge.
- John, E. 1998: 'Reading Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge: Philosophical Thought in Literary Context'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 56, pp. 331-48.

- Johnson, B. 1980: *Critical Differences*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jones, K. 2003: 'Emotion, Weakness of Will, and the Normative Conception of Agency'. In A. Hatzimoysis (ed.) *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 181-200.
- Jones, P. 1975: *Philosophy and the Novel*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Kidd, E. & Castano, E. 2013: 'Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind' *Science* Vol. 342, Issue 6156, pp. 377-380.
- Kieran, M. & McIver Lopes, D. 2006: *Knowing Art: essays in aesthetics and epistemology*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Kieran, M. 2003: 'In search of narrative'. In *Imagination, Philosophy and the Arts* Kieran, M. & McIver Lopes, D. (eds.) Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 69-87.
- Kieran, M. 1996: 'In Defence of Critical Pluralism.' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 239-251.
- Kivy, P. 1997: *Philosophies of Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koopman, E. 2015: 'Empathetic reactions after reading' *Poetics* Vol. 50, pp. 62-79.
- Kuper, A. 2000: *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account*. London: Harvard University Press. Chapter 3.
- Kusch, M. 2002: *Knowledge by Agreement: The Programme of Communitarian Epistemology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kvanvig, J. 2003: *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1980: *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lamarque, P. & Olsen, S.H. 1994: *Truth, Fiction and Literature*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Lamarque, P. 1996: *Fictional Points of View*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Lamarque, P. 2006: 'Cognitive Values in the Arts: Marking the Boundaries'. In *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* Kieran, M. (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

- Lamarque, P. 2007: 'Learning from literature'. In *A Sense of the World* Gibson, J. Huemer W. & Pocchi, L (eds.). London: Routledge, pp. 13-23.
- Lamarque, P. 2009: 'The Elusiveness of Poetic Meaning'. *Ratio*, Vol. 22, pp. 398-420.
- Lamarque, P. 2010: 'Literature and Truth' in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature* Hagberg, G. L. & Jost, W. (eds.). Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 367-384.
- Lamarque, P. 2013: 'Literature'. In *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* Gaut, B. & McIver Lopes, D. (eds.) London: Routledge, pp. 521-531.
- Lamarque, P. 2014: *The Opacity of Narrative*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Landy, J. 2012: *How to do things with fictions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lawrence, D. H. 1967: *Selected Literary Criticism*. London: William Heinemann.
- Leavis, F. R. 1968: *A Selection from Scrutiny* Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leavis, F. R. 1962: *The Great Tradition*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lewis, D. 1978: 'Truth in Fiction'. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 15, pp. 37-46.
- Lipton, P. 1991: *Inference to the Best Explanation*. London: Routledge.
- Lodge, D. 1977: *The Modes of Modern Writing*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Lodge, D. 2002: *Consciousness and the Novel*. Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Luhrmann, T. M. 1996: *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Lycan, W. G. 2000: *Philosophy of Language: a contemporary introduction*. London: Routledge. Chapter 14.
- Machery, E. 2011: 'Thought Experiments and Philosophical Knowledge'. In *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 42(3), pp. 191-214.
- Magee, B. 1978, 2001: *Talking Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Dialogue with Iris Murdoch.

- Mahood, M. M. 1987: 'Introduction' to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malcolm, N. 1986: *Nothing is Hidden*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Margolis, J. 1976: 'Robust Relativism'. In *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 35, pp. 37-46.
- Margolis, J. 1980: *Art and Philosophy*. Brighton: The Harvester Press.
- Margolis, J. 2002: 'One and Only One Correct Interpretation' in *Is There A Single Right Interpretation?* Krausz, M. (ed.). Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 26-44.
- Maxwell, N. 2000: 'The Mind-Body Problem and Explanatory Dualism'. *Philosophy*, Vol. 75, pp. 49-71.
- McDowell, J. 1985: 'Functionalism and Anomalous Monism'. In *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson* LePore, E. & McLaughlin, B. (eds.) pp. 387-398, Oxford: Blackwell.
- McGinn, M. 2006: *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mellor, D.H. 1968: 'On Literary Truth'. *Ratio*, Vol. X, pp. 150-168.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (ed.) 1981: *On Narrative*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Moran, C. 2012: *Moranthology*. London: Ebury Press.
- Morton, A. 2003: *A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Murdoch, I. 1956: 'Vision and Choice in Morality' *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* no. 30, pp. 32-58.
- Nehamas, A. 1985: *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. London: Harvard University Press.
- New, C. 1999: *Philosophy of Literature: An Introduction*. London, Routledge.
- Nietzsche, F. 1872, 1886, 1993: *The Birth of Tragedy: out of the spirit of music*. London: Penguin.
- Nisbett, R. & Ross, L. 1980: *Human Inference*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Nozick, R. 1974: *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Novitz, D. 1987: *Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Novitz, D. 2002: 'Against Critical Pluralism' in *Is There A Single Right Interpretation?* Krausz, M. (ed.) Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 101-121.
- Nussbaum, M. 1992: *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. 2001: *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. 1983: 'Reply to Richard Wollheim, Patrick Gardiner and Hilary Putnam'. In *New Literary History*, Vol. XV, pp. 201-208.
- Oatley, K. & Gholamain, M. 1997: 'Emotions and identification: connections between readers and fiction.' In *Emotion and the arts* M. Hjort & S. Lauer (eds.) New York: Oxford University Press pp. 263-281.
- O'Brien, E. 2011: *Saints and Sinners*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Olsen, S.H. 1985: *The Structure of Literary Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Orwell, G. 1958, 1967: *George Orwell: Selected Writing*. London: Heinemann Education.
- Peet, M. & Robinson, D. 1992: *Leading Questions*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes.
- Pettersson, A. 2012: *The Concept of Literary Application*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Phythian, B. A. 1978: *Considering Poetry: an approach to criticism*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Plato trans. Hugh Tredennick 1954, 1987: *The Apology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Plato trans. Lamb, W. R. M. 1962: *Ion*. London: Heinemann.
- Plato, 2003: *The Republic*. Trans. Lee, D. London: Penguin.
- Pope, R. 2012: *Studying English literature and Language*. London: Routledge.

- Price, M. 1983: *Forms of Life: Character and Moral Imagination in the Novel*. London: Yale University Press.
- Priest, G. 2000: 'Could Everything Be True?' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 78 (2), pp. 189-195.
- Pritchard, D. 2008: 'Knowing the answer, Understanding and Epistemic Value.' *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, Vol. 77, pp. 325-339.
- Pritchard, D. 2010: *The Nature and Value of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Putnam, H. 1978: *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Putnam, H. 1983a: 'Is there a fact of the matter about fiction?' *Poetics Today*, Vol. 4(1), pp. 77-81.
- Putnam, H. 1983b: 'Taking Rules Seriously – A Response to Martha Nussbaum'. *New Literary History*, Vol. XV, pp. 193-200.
- Queneau, R. 1979: *Exercises in Style*. Trans. Wright, B. London: John Calder.
- Rand, R. 1987: 'Ozone: an essay on Keats'. In Machin, R & Norris, C. (eds.) *Post-structuralist Readings of English Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 294-307.
- Ribeiro, A. C. 2014: 'Heavenly Hurt: The Joy and Value of Sad Poetry.' In Levinson, J. (ed.) *Suffering Art Gladly: The Paradox of Negative Emotion in Art*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 186-206.
- Richards, I. A. 1929: *Practical Criticism*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.
- Richardson, J. & Leiter, B. 2001: *Nietzsche*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Riggs, W. 2003: 'Understanding 'virtue' and the virtue of understanding'. In DePaul, M. & Zagzebski, L. (eds.) *Intellectual Virtue*, pp. 203-226, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Robinson, J. 2005: *Deeper than Reason*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rowe, M.W. 1997: 'Lamarque and Olsen on Literature and Truth'. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 47, no.188, pp. 322-341.
- Rowe, M. W. 2009: 'Literature, knowledge, and the Aesthetic Attitude' in *Ratio* 22(4), pp. 375-97.

- Russell, W. 1981: *Educating Rita*. London: French.
- Ryle, G. 2009: "The Thinking of Thoughts: what Is 'Le Penseur' Doing?" In *Collected Essays 1929-1968*. London: Routledge, pp. 494-510.
- Said, E. 1993: *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Sartre, J. P. 1978: *What is Literature?* London: Methuen.
- Schama, S. 1989: *Citizens: a chronicle of the French revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Scheffler, I. 1979: *Beyond the Letter: a philosophical inquiry into ambiguity, vagueness, and metaphor in language*. London: RKP.
- Schroeder, S. (ed.) 2010: *The Philosophy of Literature*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Scott Fitzgerald, F. 1979: *The Great Gatsby*. London: Penguin.
- Scruton, R. 1974: *Art and the Imagination*. London: Harper & Row.
- Scruton, R. 2001: *Sexual Desire: a philosophical investigation*. London: Phoenix.
- Shaw, Irwin 1978: 'The Girls in Their Summer Dresses' In *Short Stories: Five Decades*. London: Jonathan Cape, pp. 62-68.
- Shieber, J. 2010: 'On the Nature of Thought Experiments and a Core Motivation of Experimental Philosophy'. In *Philosophical Psychology*, 23(4), pp. 547-564.
- Shostak, M. 1981: *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. London: Allen Lane.
- Skilleas, Ole Martin 2001: *Philosophy and Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Skilleas, Ole Martin, 2006: 'Knowledge and Imagination in Fiction and Autobiography'. In *Metaphilosophy* Vol.37, no.2, pp. 259-276.
- Sliwa, P. 2015: 'What is the relationship between understanding and knowledge?' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 115, pp. 57-74.
- Smith, B. 2007: 'The objectivity of tastes and tasting' in Smith, B. ed. *Questions of Taste: the philosophy of wine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 41-77.
- Sorensen, R. 1992: *Thought Experiments*. Oxford: OUP.

- Soskice, J. M. 1985: *Metaphor and Religious Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sperber, D. 1982: *On Anthropological Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- Stanley, J. & Williamson, T. 2001: 'Knowing How' *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 98, no. 8, pp. 411-444.
- Stecker, R. 1994: 'Art Interpretation'. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 52, pp. 193-206.
- Stecker, R. 1996: 'What is Literature?' *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, No. 198, pp. 681-694.
- Stecker, R. 1997: *Artworks*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Stich, S. 1983: *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science: The Case against Belief*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Stock, K. 2011: 'Fictive Utterance and Imagining'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society supplementary volume*, 85, pp. 145-161.
- Stock, K. 2013: 'Imagination and Fiction: some issues' *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 8, Issue 10, pp. 887-896.
- Stolnitz, J. 1992: 'On the Cognitive Triviality of Art'. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32, pp. 191-200.
- Strawson, G. 2004: 'Against Narrativity'. *Ratio*, Vol. 17, pp. 428-452.
- Stump, E. 2010: *Wandering in the Dark*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Part One.
- Tanner, M. 1993: 'Book review of Nussbaum, M. Love's Knowledge' in *British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 33, pp. 297-298.
- Tennyson, A. 1987: *The Poems of Tennyson*. Ricks, C (ed.), Vol. 1. Harlow: Longman.
- Thucydides 2014: *History: Book 1*. Trans. Rhodes, P. J. Oxford: Oxbow books.
- Todorov, T. 1973: 'The Notion of Literature'. *New Literary History*, Vol. 5, pp. 5-16.
- Tolhurst, W. E. 1979: 'On What a Text Is and How It Means' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 19, pp. 3-14.

- Tolstoy, L. 1877, 1995: *Anna Karenina*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics.
- Toole, John Kennedy 1980: *A Confederacy of Dunces*. London: Penguin.
- Vlastos, G. 1991: *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 21-44.
- Wain, J. ed. 1972 (2nd edition): *Interpretations*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Walsh, D. 1968: 'The Cognitive Content of Art'. In *Contemporary Studies in Aesthetics* Coleman, F. J. (ed.). London: McGraw Hill.
- Walsh, D. 1969: *Literature and Knowledge*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.
- Walton, K. 1970: 'Categories of Art'. *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 79, pp. 334-367.
- Walton, K. 1973: 'Pictures and Make Believe'. *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 82, pp. 283-319.
- Walton, K. 1978: 'Fearing Fiction'. *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 75, pp. 6-27.
- Walton, K. 1990: *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Walton, K. 2015: 'Metaphor and Prop Oriented Make-Believe'. In *Other Shoes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 175-195.
- Wiggins, D. 1980: 'Deliberation and Practical Reason' in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. London: University of California Press, pp. 221-240.
- Wilkes, K. V. 1988: *Real People: Personal Identity without Thought Experiments*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Wilkes, K.V. 1991: 'The Relationship Between Scientific Psychology and Common-Sense Psychology'. *Synthese*, Vol. 89, pp. 15-39.
- Williams, B. 1981: 'Moral luck' in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, B. 1995: 'Replies' in Altham, J. and Harrison, R. eds. *World, Mind, And Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 185-224.
- Williams, B. 2007: 'Life as Narrative'. *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 17(2), pp. 305-314.

- Williams, B. 2010: *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Williams, T. 1965: *Sweetbird of Youth, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Glass Menagerie*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Wilson, C. 2013: 'Grief and the Poet'. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 53(1), pp. 77-91.
- Wittgenstein, L. 1972: *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. Anscombe, E. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. 2001: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge.
- Wittgenstein, L. 2010: *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* ed. Rush Rhees. Bishopstone: Brynmill.
- Wodehouse, P. G. 1990: *The Golf Omnibus*. London: Century Hutchinson.
- Wollheim, R. 1983: 'Flawed Crystals: James' *The Golden Bowl* and the plausibility of Literature as Moral Philosophy'. *New Literary History*, Vol. XV, pp. 185-191.
- Wollheim, R. 1984: *The Thread of Life*. London: Tale University Press.
- Woodward, J. 2003: *Making Things Happen*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Woolf, V. 1993: *The Waves*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wright, C. 1992: *Truth and Objectivity*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Wright, W. 2007: 'Why Naturalize Consciousness?' *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XLV, pp. 583-607.
- Young, J. 2001: *Art and Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Zagzebski, L. 1996: *Virtues of the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. 2001: 'Recovering Understanding'. In *Knowledge, Truth and Duty* Stemp, M. ed. New York: Oxford University Press.